



Legislative Assembly
of Ontario

First Session, 41st Parliament

Assemblée législative
de l'Ontario

Première session, 41^e législature

**Official Report
of Debates
(Hansard)**

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

Tuesday 24 March 2015

Mardi 24 mars 2015

Speaker
Honourable Dave Levac

Clerk
Deborah Deller

Président
L'honorable Dave Levac

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Room 500, West Wing, Legislative Building
111 Wellesley Street West, Queen's Park
Toronto ON M7A 1A2
Telephone 416-325-7400; fax 416-325-7430
Published by the Legislative Assembly of Ontario



Service du Journal des débats et d'interprétation
Salle 500, aile ouest, Édifice du Parlement
111, rue Wellesley ouest, Queen's Park
Toronto ON M7A 1A2
Téléphone, 416-325-7400; télécopieur, 416-325-7430
Publié par l'Assemblée législative de l'Ontario

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
OF ONTARIO

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE
DE L'ONTARIO

Tuesday 24 March 2015

Mardi 24 mars 2015

The House met at 0900.

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

Prayers.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

INVASIVE SPECIES ACT, 2015
LOI DE 2015 SUR LES ESPÈCES
ENVAHISSANTES

Resuming the debate adjourned on December 8, 2014, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 37, An Act respecting Invasive Species / Projet de loi 37, Loi concernant les espèces envahissantes.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Further debate? The member for Timmins–James Bay.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Thanks for your humour and understanding, Speaker; much appreciated.

There are a few things I just want to say at the outset of this debate. First of all, we're going to be supporting this bill. I think it goes a long way to addressing some of the issues that deal with having to control evasive species in the province of Ontario. But as with every bill, the devil is in the details in regard to what this bill actually will end up doing, what it will end up costing and how effective it's going to be. That's what I'd like to spend my time talking about because, as we know, this bill should pass second reading, and I would imagine it will. The government's proposing this bill, so it's a government bill. More than likely this bill will pass second reading. It will go into committee and we'll get a chance, when this gets into committee, to be able to get into some of the issues that I want to raise in this particular debate.

The first thing I just want to say is, I don't think anybody in this House—and I think probably hardly anybody in this province—is going to argue that we don't have a problem when it comes to evasive species. We saw what happened with various evasive species that have introduced themselves into our ecosystem here in Ontario: everything from what was dragged in from the oceans through the Great Lakes in regard to zebra mussels and other species that have migrated here by way of attaching themselves to seafaring ships that end up inside our Great Lakes system to—what ends up happening is just products being shipped by air and by rail from around North America and around the world that end up here in Ontario and eventually end up in our environment.

What that could mean, quite frankly, to the ecosystem in those areas—we all see it driving down the highways, at least where I come from. Purple loosestrife is abundant and pretty plentiful across most ditches across Ontario. It's actually quite a pretty flower, and I know the bees like it, but it is a problem when it comes to other species that it comes into contact with.

I guess the question becomes—and this is really the fundamental question—how effectively can any legislation deal with any of that? I think we shouldn't delude ourselves at the very beginning. There's no way in heck, if this bill was perfect, that you're going to eliminate the threat of evasive species in the province of Ontario. Some of the ways by which evasive species end up coming into this province and are introduced into our ecosystem may be out of our control, to a certain degree.

Now, it's not to say that we shouldn't be doing something, it's not to say we shouldn't support this legislation; obviously, this legislation is a step in the right direction. I think the general point that I'm trying to make is that with all the plans of mice and men, at the end of the day nature will have its way. So let's not pat ourselves on the back and walk away from this exercise to say, "Oh, my God, look at this. The Legislature of Ontario, we have on such-and-such a date passed such-and-such a bill that is going to eliminate evasive species from being introduced in the ecosystem of Ontario." Because the fact is that we will still have evasive species that'll be introducing themselves into our province. No matter how hard we work at it and no matter how good we are it, we're going to always have that problem.

So let's be clear: What this is is an attempt in order to try to deal with those things that we can have an effect on, by way of good public policy and by way of being able to control how these particular species end up in our ecosystem. That's just generally the first comment I want to make.

The second thing I want to say: As I read through this bill—and I encourage members to read this bill because I think it's indicative of what is the problem in this Legislature to a great extent—much of what's going to happen in this bill is going to be covered by regulation. We, as legislators who stand here today who are debating and eventually will pass a bill that will go into law, really have no idea what the bill's going to look like in the end, Mr. Speaker, because the regulations that are to be drafted by cabinet are not subject to this Legislature's approval.

We, for whatever reason, got ourselves down this path of delegating the authority of the Legislature to regulation and to cabinet to do what they want when it comes to

regulation. I think that's unfortunate because I think that regulations should reflect what it is that the legislators wanted at the very beginning. I would hope that we would go back to the day where regulation was done in such—first of all, delegating our authority for cabinet to make decisions about legislation by putting everything into regulation used to be not the norm, it used to be the exception, in this place.

When we were passing legislation in the House, the bills were thicker—no question, they were more voluminous—they took longer to draft because they were much more complicated, but the bill actually dealt with, “In the case of X, this is what the minister shall do; in the case of Y, this is what the minister may do.” It was pretty well spelled out in the legislation what the bill was intended to do and how it was going to happen. That's the way that legislation was drafted in this House for over 100 years.

For whatever reasons—and we can all point to each other in this place because we've all been in government in the last 20-some-odd years in this place—we have more and more devolved the power of this Legislature to the corner office of the Premier and to cabinet. I think that's unfortunate because what you end up with is the Legislature pronouncing itself on something, deciding to take a collective decision to do whatever that is, and then cabinet goes off and does what the heck it wants.

I will give you a bill as an example that orchestrates this, and I have raised this before. Back in the day there was a Premier by the name of Bob Rae. Bob Rae decided that he wanted to introduce casinos in the province of Ontario, to the chagrin of some. There were people in this province at the time, as there are now, who believed we should have never brought casinos to the province of Ontario. I'm not one of them; I was actually in favour of casinos being established in Ontario.

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But the point is this: The Conservatives then, who were the third party, took the position that casinos should not be allowed to be established in a community unless there was a referendum where the public in that community has the say. So what ended up happening is that when the NDP was defeated and the Conservatives took office, they introduced a bill in this House, and the bill essentially said that in the future, with any casino to be established in the province of Ontario, there needs to be a referendum. This House debated that bill. This House passed that bill. Quite frankly, it was probably not a bad idea. But all of the details as to what would be in the referendum and whether there was going to be a referendum was left to regulation. This House passed a bill that said, “There shall be a referendum any time a new casino is established in Ontario.” The House pronounced itself on that at second and third reading. The bill was passed into law and it was enacted. The difficulty: All of the detail was in the regulation. Then, some years later, when Dalton McGuinty became the Premier of Ontario, he decided by regulation that there would be no referendum at the establishment of any casino in the province of Ontario.

Well, Speaker, that is not what this House decided. What this House decided at the time was, “There shall be

a referendum.” It seems to me that what should have happened, if we had not delegated our authority as we did on that particular bill, is that the government would have been forced to come into this House and to bring a bill to say, “We are changing so that there no longer needs to be a referendum,” and this House could have pronounced itself on that idea, either yes or no, up and down.

That's the problem when you start delegating authority. If you look at this bill, Speaker, much of the detail—I would say about 90% of the detail as to how this bill is going to work—is going to be left to the minister and is going to be left to the cabinet to decide by regulation. They're going to decide what is an evasive species. It's not going to be some mechanism that we understand now at second reading; it's going to be something that's going to be established in regulation after this bill is passed. How is the evasive species strategy going to deal with trying to deal with the evasive species? All of those questions are left to regulation. It just seems me that this is an issue that all of us have something to say about. The details by which this is to work should at the very least be inside the bill so that we understand clearly what it is we are trying to do by way of strategies to deal with evasive species.

How can the public comment on this bill in committee effectively if they don't have what's in—there's nothing in the bill at this point, second reading, that deals with the specifics of how we are going to identify evasive species and what the strategies are going to be to deal with evasive species. The only thing we know for sure is what the fines will be: up to \$250,000—is it \$250,000 or \$250 million? Is it thousand or million? It has to be thousand.

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: Thousand.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Yes, \$250,000, and going to jail for a year. We know this because in the bill it's prescribed what the penalties will be. I don't believe you can delegate that to cabinet. I believe that's something that still has to be spelled out in law, because only this Legislature can deal with those issues. But that's about the only thing we're certain about. We're not certain as to the mechanisms by which we will identify and then deal with evasive species.

So when the public and those people interested in dealing with evasive species issues come to the committee, they're going to be able to pronounce themselves generally on the issue, but they're going to have a heck of a hard time trying to hone in on, how is the strategy going to work, what is the government really proposing, does it make sense, should it be adjusted, is it strong enough, is it too strong? You can't pronounce yourself on any of that stuff because we don't know. It's essentially like holding up a bill that has a title and the inside of the bill is blank. We know what the title of the bill is, we know the effect of what the government wants, but we have no idea of what the details are going to be.

Now, I realize that for most government members who sit on the back bench and most cabinet ministers and, I would argue, for a whole bunch of opposition members, we don't think about the danger of delegating authority to

cabinet. It's not the top-of-mind issue that everybody thinks about—

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Until they cancelled the \$1.2-billion gas plant.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Until they cancelled the \$1.2-billion gas plant, as the member from Nepean says; exactly. But that was, again, a decision by cabinet.

My point is, if we end up in the situation that we are in now where we draft legislation and everything is left to regulation, it beckons the question, what is this Legislature doing, delegating its authority to cabinet? Legislation should be drafted in such a way that is more prescriptive, that describes what the government wants to do and how they're going to do it. That would be the first comment that I would make.

The other comment I want to make is—you look at the Ministry of Natural Resources. What this bill is going to do—which is a good idea—is they are going to take the myriad of ministries and the myriad of policies that exist out there, the different ministries that deal with evasive species, and put them all under one roof and have one authority to deal with it: one minister. Okay, I think that makes an ample amount of sense. Imagine trying to fight the Second World War and you had 15 generals trying to essentially lead the Battle of Stalingrad or whatever it might be. It wouldn't make any sense. You have to have one person who is in charge, who at the end of the day listens to all of the advice but makes the decision. If we're going to have a battle on evasive species—and I think the war example is a little bit harsh. But my point is, I agree you have to have somebody who is heading up the charge, somebody who ultimately makes the decision about how we're going to do this and what we're going to do and all of that kind of stuff, based on what's in the legislation.

The problem is that the Ministry of Natural Resources is one of those ministries that has been targeted, over the next three years, to lose 6% per year. I repeat: The Ministry of Natural Resources, according to the last budget—the progressive Kathleen Wynne budget that the NDP voted against—has a 6% reduction over the next three years, that they lose each year over the next three years in their budget. How are they going to pay for this?

Here is the question: Who is going to be left at the Ministry of Natural Resources to shut off the lights as they walk out of the room? Who are going to be the inspectors? Who are going to be the field staff who deal with the science necessary to deal with what are the evasive species and what the targets should be and how we deal with the elimination of that evasive species? Who is going to do this work if you don't have people at the ministry who are capable of doing that because they don't have the staff anymore? The MNR, the Ministry of Natural Resources, has shut down the entire scientific division of the MNR; it's gone. That was under the progressive government of the Liberals. Remember those progressives? They talked about, "Oh, my God, we campaigned from the left." But God, did they govern from the right.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: That's an invasive species.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I was coming to that. You're beating me to the line. You're really good, Mr. Natyshak; you're very good. I like the way he thought about where I was going. Really, the endangered species here is the progressive Liberal. That's the endangered species, if we were talking about endangered species. I wanted to use that line. My good friend Mr. Vanthof came up with that this morning.

My point is, there's hardly the capacity within the Ministry of Natural Resources today, and we know that the Ministry of Natural Resources is going to lose 6% funding each and every year for the next three years. Who is going to do this? Who is going to do the work that has to be done to deal with evasive species?

So here's the situation—because we're seeing it in other areas of the Ministry of Natural Resources, and I only use that ministry as an example. There are all kinds of legislative obligations that that ministry has. It administers the Public Lands Act; it administers a number of acts dealing with how we approach fishing and hunting in our province; it deals with the quarries act; it deals with a whole bunch of different legislation that they are legislatively obligated to carry out mandates of, given to them by this Legislature. They can't do it now.

Mr. Speaker, if you went into your local Ministry of Natural Resources office and said, "I want to exercise my right as an Ontarian in order to get a land use permit from the Ministry of Natural Resources," you wouldn't even be allowed to apply. Why? Not because the legislation says that you cannot have a land use permit. Of course, legislation permits land use permits. The Legislature decided some years ago that where there is crown land and somebody has a use for it and it's not being sold, you can enter into an agreement with the Ministry of Natural Resources to have a land use permit to do whatever it is that you're trying to do, provided it's within the context of what makes some sense for us from a policy perspective in the Ministry of Natural Resources. But you can't even get the permit today. Do you know why? There's no money. There's nobody in the ministry capable of dealing with the application for a land use permit.

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In my part of the world, we get a fair amount of these kinds of requests: people trying to get land use permits for everything from trying to set up a place for people to be able to do some collective camping, to people trying to operate a business, let's say a campground or something like that, and they need a certain part of land in order to do whatever. You can't even get the permit anymore. So they go to the ministry to apply for the ministry permit that they're entitled to get, they go online—I don't even know if you can still get it online; I know you could at one point—and nobody is there to process the application. They're told, "We're not taking any applications for land use permits." So how in heck are this ministry and this minister going to deal with evasive species when we don't even have the capacity to process the land use permit within the ministry? They don't have the staff at the MNR to be able to do this.

There's a whole section in the bill—I forget what the section number is—that deals with the minister having the power to name the people who will be responsible for doing the inspections and stuff. My question is, who is that? We're going to give it to conservation officers? I think there's, what, 250 conservation officers in the province of Ontario, who already have a whole bunch of work to do because they've been chopped greatly over the last number of years.

I was talking to somebody who used to work at the MNR, who is now retired, in Timmins. We were talking about how when I was first elected there were 60 MNR staff at the Timmins office and 57 MNR staff at the Gogama office. We're down to 30 staff between both offices. Who is left to do the work?

We're going to give conservation officers the job of enforcing the invasive species act legislation? God, they can't even get gas to get in their trucks sometimes, as was the case when the Tories were in power. You couldn't get gas in your truck to go drive in the bush to make sure that people were fishing and hunting according to the law. So I'm asking, who's going to do this?

Again, it brings me to the other issue that I've raised in this house a number of times: Governments and, I would argue, private members have a habit of introducing legislation in this House without any thought of how we're going to pay for it. In the case of the opposition and private members, we cannot propose a bill that costs money, so we're kind of exonerated from any blame at that point. But every bill that the government brings forward has a financial implication of some type. This bill is one that's going to cost money.

You have, essentially, a \$12-billion deficit currently and a government that doesn't seem to have a plan to deal with balancing the books by 2017-18, as they said they would, and we're going to add costs to the Ministry of Natural Resources, if you were to actually do this bill right. You would have to add costs to the treasury of Ontario to be able to make this bill work.

Again, I'm not arguing against this bill. I'm just raising a philosophical point: When bringing legislation to the floor of the Legislature, you would think that cabinet would look at the Minister of Finance and say, "Hey, Mr. Sousa, do we have the money to do this?" If they didn't have that conversation, I say, shame on them. If that discussion wasn't had at the cabinet table, when it comes to whether you have the money to carry out the mandate of this legislation, then it tells me we're in a lot bigger trouble than we think we are.

You wonder why you have a \$12-billion deficit? Fourteen years of Liberal government doing this kind of stuff without the context of how you're going to pay for it adds up after a point in time.

Listen, they're not responsible for the entire \$12 billion. I recognize the economy had a great part to do with that. Health care services, schools and roads still need to be maintained. Those services have to be given, and those costs are going up. I have sympathy for the government trying to deal with a pretty difficult financial situation. I don't care who you are; you have to deal with that.

But my point that I'm making—okay, fine, you brought this legislation to the table. Nowhere did I hear in the minister's speech and nowhere did I see in any of the literature that came out with this legislation how much this bill is going to cost the treasury of Ontario over the next number of years and what the strategy is to pay for that. I think that would be incumbent.

Imagine, in your own personal finances, if you decide: "Well, I just got a new policy that my wife and I are going to take a trip every year for two weeks to Europe." What a great policy. Murielle and I will be dancing down the aisles thinking about all the great places we get to go for two weeks every year. But imagine if you did that without the context of saying, "Well, honey, it means to say that we have to put so much money away every month. It means we have to cut back on expenses here in order to make sure we have the money to take that holiday. Then maybe we can afford to take that holiday." Who, in their personal finances—unless they are living off their credit card, and that's going to come to an end at one point—doesn't say, "All right, we've made a policy decision in our household: two weeks to Europe every year. You better have figured out how you're going to pay for it before you implement that decision"? That's what most of us do in our families. That's what most people do in small businesses. That's what happens—not always in large businesses. Large business, I would argue, is a lot like government. You want to waste money? The bigger the business, the more money you can waste. This whole fallacy that the private sector does it better—go take a look at large corporations. They're not any different than government. They are like crazy cabinets that we have over here, and of a different stripe. They do bad decisions well.

My point is, any time that the government ever comes with any kind of declaration of how they're going to pay for this—now, again, I want to say as a New Democrat that I support this legislation. I think this legislation is long overdue. I think we have to have a strategy to deal with evasive species. But I'm also a practical New Democrat who says, "Okay, how are we going to pay for this?"

I will remind you of somebody by the name of Tommy Douglas. When Tommy Douglas came to government back in Saskatchewan in the late 1940s, early 1950s, what was the first thing that Tommy Douglas did? Everybody says, "Oh, he did health care." No, no, no, no. New Democrats back then, the CCF in Saskatchewan, did not do—

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Why don't you ever talk about Bob Rae?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I've talked about Bob. I already did two seconds ago. You weren't listening.

My point is, when Tommy came to power, everybody says, "Oh, the first he did was health care." No. You know the first thing that Tommy Douglas did with his cabinet? They balanced the books. It took them three mandates to be able to undo the mess the Liberals had left in Saskatchewan; where they had left the Saskatchewan provincial government at that time virtually

bankrupt. Tommy Douglas, for three terms, worked at balancing the books.

What was the second thing Tommy Douglas did?

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Electrified.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: He electrified rural Saskatchewan. He had to build up the economy of Saskatchewan to build the dollars needed not only to allow Saskatchewan rural farmers to be able to work more efficiently, but they had to build up the economy to have money to build for health care.

What I'm saying here is that as a New Democrat I understand that you need to be able to figure out how you're going to pay for this stuff before you do it. I'm just saying up front here, my friends in the Liberal Party, very good direction as far as legislation. It's not the way I would have written the bill, but good stuff. But please tell me how you're going to pay for this. I hope that the parliamentary assistant for agriculture comments on this when he is back and gets a chance to respond to it, because I would like to know how they are going to pay for the protection under the evasive species.

The other thing in this particular bill that you've got to take a look at—first of all, we're delegating the authority of the cabinet, so we don't know what this bill is going to look like, other than the title says we're going to deal with evasive species. How they're going to do that, God only knows. Cabinet will figure out the details and we're going to find out by way of a press release some time after the bill is passed. I want to come back to that, because I think it speaks to what we need to do legislatively here to fix that.

Not only have they not decided how they're going to pay for this, or told us how they're going to pay for it, but when you take a look at the legislation, the legislation itself is somewhat ambiguous when it comes to deciding who is going to be responsible for enforcing the policies made by cabinet when it comes to dealing with evasive species. If you look at what the bill says, the bill doesn't describe, "It's going to be the Ministry of Natural Resources and these particular people who are responsible for carrying out what is established under the bill and the regulation." It says the minister will decide that by way of regulation. This may end up becoming some private corporation, because we know that this government, God, they love the private sector. The Liberals, I tell you, are outflanking the Conservatives on the right. Everything is private sector. Privatize hydro, backdoor privatization of wine and beer sales in Ontario, privatization of the building of capital in this province when it comes to—not capital, but infrastructure. How many billions of dollars did we waste on that?

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Eight billion.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Eight billion dollars. Everything that's private is wonderful. This legislation allows for privatization by the back door of the people who are going to be dealing with whatever is done by way of regulation.

0930

If you go and look at the bill, it essentially says that the minister will decide who it is who's going to go out

there and actually do the enforcement of whatever laws have to be enforced. That might be a conservation officer, maybe, or it might be—and I think more likely—somebody in the private sector who is going to be contracted to do this. They might go and decide to get a deal with a not-for-profit to do this. Maybe they're going to go to the conservation authorities and have them do it—or maybe they're just going to download it onto the municipalities like they've done with everything else around here. That's why they don't have to talk about cost: Because it's plausible that the municipalities and the LSBs are going to be responsible for enforcing what's under this bill.

The government, in this bill, is essentially being pretty vague not only about how they're going to pay for this—they're pretty vague about what they're going to do and how they're going to do it—but they're also being pretty vague about who's going to carry out the mandate of this bill. This could take the form of privatization and it could take the form of downloading on municipalities. That's just from my reading this bill a couple of times, what I've been able to come up with as I read through the bill.

It came back to the point of, why do we draft bills in this way? Because it's to the advantage of the government. The government can go off and do what it wants to do.

Speaker, I would argue that what's needed in this Legislature are probably two things in order to deal with these types of bills, where everything is left to regulation. I think the first thing is that we should stop delegating the authority of this House to the cabinet. Yes, there are times when we need to do that. I understand that. I've been around here long enough to know that cabinet does need to deal with some of these things, because the ministry has got to go off and work out some of the details. But at the very most, that should be the exception to the rule, not the rule. So we should, first of all, very much diminish our reliance on putting everything in regulation.

The second thing I think we need do is to make some changes at our committee level when it comes to dealing with regulation. Currently, we are very limited as members. Even the government is limited, with their members, in being able to call any regulation before the committee for review.

For example, there should be a mechanism that says: If the government is going to draft regulations for this bill, once the regulations are done, they should come back as a package to a committee of this Legislature where, at least, the committee has to approve or turn down the regulation. At least this way, the committee would be able to say, "You know what? No, we don't want to approve this and we're kicking this back to the House. Let the government deal with coming back and bringing a better product than the regulations they've put forward." In that way, at least the will of the House is maintained—the idea of Parliament being the place by which we not only decide on the authority to spend money, but how money is spent, is dealt with in the Legislature.

I don't argue that any member of this House, including a cabinet minister, should ever micromanage a ministry. I know my good friend Madeleine Meilleur—I've known her for a lot of years—is not a micromanager. I don't believe micromanaging how our civil servants do their jobs is what we have to do in this Legislature. But I do believe that we have to set the general policy direction. The problem now is that once the cabinet has decided what's going to go into the regulation—we need to have a mechanism so that the regulation comes back to us in some form so we're able to see what the government has done.

Oh, yes, the government will get up and say, "Oh, but Gilles, it's not a problem. You'll be able to get all the regulations on the Ontario Gazette the Monday after they are filed." Yes, I get to see them, I get to read them, but do any members of this House have any say on what is in those regulations? Should the regulations stand as done under what's printed in the Gazette?

For those people who don't know what I'm talking about, every week the Ontario government puts out what they call the Ontario Gazette. There is a requirement for cabinet: that any time they pass a regulation, the regulation be posted in that Gazette so that everybody can see what's happened. I encourage all members to read the Gazette on Mondays, especially under their ministry portfolios, in order to keep an eye on what's going on with regulation.

My point is, there has to be a mechanism, I think, at the very least, so that where we decide in legislation to delegate the authority in some bills—and maybe we don't have to do it with all bills—once the regulations are written, the regulations come back to a committee so that the committee can decide what the next step is. Do we need to do more public consultation? In other words, these would be draft regulations that would be sent to the committee.

The draft regulations that would be created by cabinet would come to the committee. The committee would say, "Okay, you know what? We need a couple of weeks of hearings here," or "We need a couple of days of hearings"—so that the stakeholders who came and spoke to us have a chance to look at this and give us their opinion—and actually fix the regulation so that it does what it is supposed to do.

I'll give you an example of why that is so important.

When Mike Harris was elected Premier, back in 1995, they decided that they wanted to change the assessment system in the province of Ontario.

Ontario had, up until about 1993, a system of assessment that had been around for a long, long time. It was pretty simple. The value of a building in 1957 had been established. They took the value of the building—I think it was 1957—and they would essentially value what that building in 1957 was worth today. So the assessment was a frozen assessment, in 1957. A whole bunch of people pointed out, correctly, the problem is that the house may have been renovated since 1957, and you need to have a mechanism to be able to properly show

the value of the house as of today, when dealing with the assessment.

The government of Ontario, then under Bob Rae, passed legislation in this House that went to market value assessment. The assessment was based on what the house was worth when the house was being valued at whatever date the evaluation happened, every two years.

The government of Mike Harris was opposed to that and voted against it when we were in government and they were the third party, and rightfully so. When they became the government, they decided—

Interjection.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: What's that? I didn't read that. Sorry, I don't have my glasses on.

Interjection.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I thought it was 1957—he pointed out that in some communities, it might have been an evaluation in 1970. But I know that for us in Timmins, it was 1957. Why do I remember that? Because I was born in 1957. That's why that number—

Mr. John Yakabuski: Me too.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: You too?

Mr. John Yakabuski: Yes.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: That's why that number always stuck in my head. Hey, we're like brothers, you and I, born in 1957.

Interjection.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Yes, that's a few things about you and I.

I digress for a second. A wonderful thing happened some years ago: They decided to do a 1957 birthday party when I turned 50, which was kind of fun. It wasn't for me; it was for everybody who was born in 1957 who was turning 50. It was a great party, but that's a whole other story. It's the only time I've ever seen that done. I just digressed. It was in Schumacher, at the hall—anyway, it will come to me in a minute. Anyway, I digress.

My point is, the Conservatives took office, and they decided to not go to market value. They decided to go to actual value. So they took market value, they morphed it into actual value, and they drafted a bill to move to this model that they preferred. Fair enough. They were a majority government; they had the right to do that.

The problem is, I remember sitting on that committee and reading the bill and seeing that they were delegating authority to regulation. I was noticing that, the way they were drafting the bill, there were actually going to be problems. I was lucky enough to sit on the original committee, back in 1992-93, that dealt with this the first time, so I had a gross understanding of the issue. I was by no means an expert on it—I still am not—but I pointed out to the committee members of the day, "Listen, there's a problem with the way this bill is drafted, because you're leaving all of this to regulation, and some of this doesn't actually jive."

It took five bills, after the actual value assessment bill was passed at third reading—four other bills were introduced into this House and had to be passed in order to fix the problems with the initial bill that had been put in place by the Tories in 1996.

I say that just as a warning of what happens when we don't do our jobs effectively by way of drafting bills. If the bill had been drafted the way that bills normally are drafted—which is that the details are in the bill, not in the regulation—those who came before the committee would have been able to see what the problems were and point out, “Well, no, this doesn't work, for this practical reason.” The government—rightfully so—could have amended their bill in order to be able to deal with it. But they didn't.

That's why I'm saying that if you're not going to stop the delegation of authority to cabinet, you at least have to have a mechanism where draft regulations come back to a committee, and that committee is allowed to look at and decide what the next step should be.

The other thing I just want to touch on—I'm just taking a look at my notes here. There was another point I wanted to make. Oh yes, that was the one. I knew there were four points and I'd hit three of them, and I was spinning around there, trying to remember what the fourth one was. Now I finally remembered.

0940

One of the things under section 27 that this bill does which is problematic is that the bill essentially says—and I'm just going to read here. Section 27 says that if an area has been designated an evasive species control area or declared an invasive place, and efforts to address the significant threat have so far failed, the minister can use whatever means necessary to remove the eradicated species, whether or not resulting in damage to property or something is moved or destroyed. That means to say we're giving the minister pretty strong powers. You, Mr. Speaker, own two acres of land somewhere in your community. There's an evasive species somewhere around the area. The government has a strategy that doesn't effectively deal with the evasive species, and they decide—

Mr. John Yakabuski: Invasive.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Yes, evasive species.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Invasive.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Invasive. Yes, “e,” “in,” I get those things wrong. It's the French in me. You English-speaking—

Mr. John Yakabuski: I'm just trying to help.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Yes, I know. We were both born in the same year.

My point is, there's still a problem with the—invasive?

Mr. John Yakabuski: Invasive.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: —invasive species. Thank you for pointing that out.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Evasive is those guys over there.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: That's the Liberals, evasive.

Mr. John Yakabuski: That's the issue: The evasive species is over there.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Got it, okay. Evasive over there; invasive. Okay, gotcha. I really appreciate you doing that for me. That clarifies a couple of things.

Anyway, I just want to say, Mr. Speaker, you have two acres of land. They're trying to deal with this inva-

sive species. The government is not successful in doing so through whatever mechanism they've established to deal with it. The minister gives them the right to say, “I'm going to go on your land and I'm going to burn down the crop,” or, “I'm going to turn over the ground,” or, “I'm going to spray it with something.” They can do whatever, and all they've got to do is give you five days' notice and they're on your ground. Holy jeez, that touches property rights pretty seriously.

Now, I'm not one of these people who believe in—what do they call themselves? The Lanark Landowners Association?

Mr. John Yakabuski: The Ontario Landowners Association.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Yes, the Landowners Association believes everything is a protection-of-property right. Listen, there is a collective part of this province and we do need to work together, and there are good reasons why we have public policy. But to give the crown the ability to go on your land and decide on their own what they're going to do, then talk about compensation after they've done it, seems to me a little bit draconian. Who knows? I would hope that no future minister would ever do something crazy like go on your land and do something that is wholly against what you would allow to happen on your land, and do it without your permission, but this bill allows that. Some will argue, “Well, you have to stop the spread of the disease, the invasive species.” I get it. But I'm sure people will come to this committee who are going to speak to that particular issue.

I understand why the minister is doing it; I get it. But again, this comes down to my point: All of the details of this are left to regulation. What is cabinet going to do when it comes to the regulation around section 27?

Mr. John Yakabuski: Who knows? That's the evasive part of it.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: The evasive people over there, right? I think that's a good point. I'm having a really good debate with you, by the way. I love Yak.

Anyway, my point is that section 27 is going to give the minister pretty extraordinary powers. Do we really want to have a situation where we delegate the details of what's going to be in section 27 to cabinet? No. The last time we looked at some of cabinet's decisions—they're currently under four OPP investigations; they were found to be in a prima facie case of contempt when it came to the gas plants. You just take a look at the litany of things this cabinet has done and it doesn't leave you the warm and glowing feeling in your heart that these people are going to do the right thing.

I would argue—and you know what? I would argue for whoever is on that side of the House; I don't care if it's these evasive Liberals or it's New Democrats or it's Tories who are there. I think you have to have a system by which you don't delegate that kind of authority to cabinet. At the very least, you don't have a way of being able to bring that back to the committee so that the committee can decide what those regulations are going to be. It just seems to me—I understand why they're doing this;

there's an argument to be made. I'm not saying that there isn't a reason why this is in the bill. I get it. But we need to spell out, I would argue—

Mr. John Yakabuski: We need some clarification.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Exactly. We need to spell out section 27 a little bit more clearly so we don't end up in a situation where you've got somebody coming on somebody's land and doing things contrary to the property owner's permission or benefit.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Then the government would be the invasive species.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: They'd be evasive, because then the government decides what the compensation is going to be. You come to my land, you do something on my property and then tell me how much I should be compensated? I don't have a lot of confidence.

Interjection.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I heard the people across the way saying municipalities do it. Just because somebody's doing something wrong doesn't mean you should repeat it. That would be my only argument. I just say that.

Again, I think the general gist of what the government is trying to do in this bill is not a bad one. I think the government is actually trying to do something effective here. I don't think anybody in this House disagrees with what the government is trying to do.

I think, however, it really does come down to those key issues that I've raised: Why are we delegating our authority to cabinet? Why aren't we hearing how they're going to pay for this, in the sense of what it's going to cost? And who in the end is actually going to carry out these particular responsibilities that we describe in the bill? We certainly know the Ministry of Natural Resources, as they are now, lack the capacity to even do what they've got under their current mandate, without throwing another one at them. Nobody in this House, as far as the minister, the PA or any other member of the government, has told us how much they figure this bill is going to cost.

I would think, in a day—especially as this government is on an austerity kick these days and trying to say that they're going to balance this budget somehow or other. I'm not sure how they're going to do that, but that's a whole other thing. You would think that the government would at least come forward and say, "Okay, we estimate it's going to cost us X. This is how we expect to be able to pay for it. This is what we think we can do, given the current fiscal room that we have or the fiscal realities of what the province of Ontario has to offer." I think most of us here would then be able to say, "Okay, we get it. You're trying to bite off a problem this big, but you can only afford to bite off this much of the problem, and that's because of resources and how much money you've got. We understand that." We can at least look each other in the eye and be truthful to each other about what we're actually going to be able to accomplish with this particular bill.

I just want to also bring a couple of local points on this particular bill, just to say that in northern Ontario we are

seeing—I'm seeing in my riding, as I'm sure you guys are in yours—that there is an issue with evasive species. We don't have many of the problems that you have down in the Great Lakes, but we're seeing the migration of evasive species from southern Ontario—invasive species—starting to move their way north further and further. We're seeing the slow creep as they start moving their way northwards.

For example, one of the things that we've seen is people who ferry boats to go fishing or to go boating from one lake to another don't do a very good job cleaning off the bottom of their boats. They take the boat from lake A and they move it 100 miles or 200 miles north, south, east or west and they drop it into another lake somewhere else. As a result, they're moving a species or they're moving something that may be natural in the other lake but is not sustainable in the lake that they're going to. So things like that have to be dealt with as well.

It's a hard one to deal with, because what do you do? Most of the lakes I come from, when we go fishing—there's no pump there, there's no pressurized water system to be able to wash off the bottom of your boat as you pull it off the Mattagami River or you pull it off Rufus Lake or wherever it is that you might be going. It really is incumbent upon the person who owns the boat to say, "Okay, I know that I've pulled this thing off Rufus and I'm going to be going to Lake X in a couple of weeks, so I'll bring the boat home and I'll wash it off." I think there needs to be a bit more education done as far as campaigns on the television, on radio, whatever, to let people know that you do have a responsibility as a boat owner to make sure that, in fact, you do clean off the hull of your boat when you're moving it from one lake to the other.

Listen, we're all guilty. I've got probably around three or four boats and I'm one of those people who moves it from Kamiskotia Lake to Round Lake to Winter Lake, and I probably very seldom have done that. As I look at this bill, it reminds me that I have a responsibility, as other people have a responsibility, to make sure that we, in fact, don't contaminate other lakes as we move from one lake to the other in the area.

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Now, I would argue, moving from Kamiskotia to Round Lake is probably not a big deal, because it's pretty well the same—

Mr. John Yakabuski: Same watershed.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: —the same part of the watershed, the same part of the ecosystem. But I think if I were to pull the boat off of Kamiskotia Lake and move it to down to God knows where, who knows what I'm bringing with me.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Where is God-Knows-Where Lake, anyway?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: God-Knows-Where Lake is in Wandering township. That's in Wandering township. There are many fishing holes that I have that are called No-Name Lake in Wandering township. That way there, if you can try to find it, you're doing quite well.

Mr. John Yakabuski: That would be a good place to trap those invasive species.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: That's right—evasive species, in that case.

I just want to say, on the local level, we do have a responsibility to be able to do the right thing.

Again, I just want to echo some of what the Environmental Commissioner was saying. I noticed a release by him the other day, where he's, what, at the end of his third term now?

Mr. John Yakabuski: Yes, it would be his third term.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: He has announced that he's not going to be seeking reappointment, which I think is kind of sad, because I believe that he has done quite a good job as the Environmental Commissioner of Ontario.

Gord and I go back a long way. For some of you who don't know, Gord was the candidate who ran against me in 1995 up in Timmins–James Bay, at the time Cochrane South. I've got great respect for Gord. I can call him Gord, because he is a friend, and I think it's a mutual respect.

I just want to take the chance, as we're talking on something that he has been pretty passionate about, to say that he has done a good job as our Environmental Commissioner. I was one who was sad to see that he wasn't again going to be standing for office.

Now, I heard—and I don't know if this is true or if this is just rumour—there was pressure coming from the government to him that they didn't want him. They didn't want to keep him. That's one of the things that I was hearing. I don't know if it's true. It may just be rumour.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: It's probably time to move on.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: But, at the end of the day, it was unfortunate that that's the case, because I do believe he did a good job.

Some people will say it's time to move on, that somebody else after three terms should take it on. I don't know about that. We've had a number of officers of the House who have stayed here a fairly long period of time who have actually done quite a good job, because they understand and know their portfolio in depth. They've done a good job and they've proven themselves. The best system that we have is a system that we have established in this Legislature where each officer of the House has to reapply after their four- or five-year term. You don't get an automatic reappointment once you're appointed the first time or the second time or the third time. You have to reapply.

I think that officers of the House should understand that when this Legislature puts that policy in place, it's one that says even though you've done a great job, and even though you have been doing the job for some time, you need to be able to, because it is an appointment—it's not a job that you've been given; it's an appointment. Just as we stand for office and have to get re-elected every four to five years, officers of the House are similar and have to be reappointed by this Legislature.

My argument would be that if somebody has done a really good job, such as our Ombudsman, such as the Environmental Commissioner, I think chances are they would get reappointed, because who else can do the job better than them?

Interjection.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: There might be some who feel different, but I'm just making the point that, in fact, if they have done a good job, they probably have a pretty good chance of being reappointed.

So I just want to say that the Environmental Commissioner has raised a number of concerns in regard to the government's direction on this particular bill. Unfortunately, I think some of the issues that he has raised have fallen on deaf ears, but the government has seen fit to bring back a similar bill to what they had introduced in this House in the minority Parliament. This is a bill that I believe will get passed in this House, and I believe it is going to be a bill that will have the support of all three parties.

Je veux finir sur le point, monsieur le Président, de rappeler qu'un des gros problèmes avec ce projet de loi fait affaire avec la question de la capacité dans l'intérieur du ministère des Richesses naturelles, qui n'est pas là, de faire ce qu'ils sont demandés à faire présentement avec les différentes législations pour lesquelles ils sont responsables. Quand on a le gouvernement qui introduit encore une autre responsabilité au ministère, il faut se demander comment ils vont être capables de rencontrer les demandes mises sur eux par cette législation qui est légiférée ici dans l'Assemblée législative.

Je pense que ça va être intéressant que le gouvernement pourra indiquer exactement ce qu'il veut faire quand ça vient aux détails du projet de loi. Tout est laissé à la réglementation. Deuxièmement, je pense que le gouvernement a besoin de démontrer combien ça va coûter pour être capable de mettre en place cette législation, mais aussi qui va être responsable de livrer les services dans ce projet de loi, parce que quand tu lis le projet de loi, c'est pas mal clair qu'on donne au ministre l'autorité de nommer n'importe qui pour être responsable de faire respecter la loi qui sera établie une fois qu'elle a passé à travers cette Assemblée. Ça peut être quelqu'un du ministère des Richesses naturelles, ça peut être quelqu'un dans les municipalités, ça peut être quelqu'un dans le secteur privé, ça peut être quelqu'un dans le secteur à but non lucratif. On va voir avec le temps, mais ce n'est pas décrit dans la loi autrement que le ministre va avoir le droit d'établir qui va « enforcer » ce projet de loi.

Donc, je veux dire au gouvernement qu'ils ont besoin de clarifier certains points avec ce projet de loi.

The bill is going to go to committee. I don't think there need to be extensive hearings on this bill; I think we need to have some. I'm trying to remember, and maybe the whip for the Conservative Party will remind me. I don't remember if we did public hearings on this bill. Did this even get past second reading last time? I don't think it did. I don't think it got to second reading.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Oh, it got to second reading.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: No, but I don't know if we actually got hearings.

Mr. John Yakabuski: I don't think it got hearings.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I don't think we got the hearings.

Anyway, my point is: I don't think it's a bill where you're going to have to do months and months of hearings, but I think there needs to be some adequate time given to public hearings, which brings me, I think, to my last point, which is the way that we pass legislation through this House.

It used to be—and I think it was a good way of doing it—that a government would decide, if it wanted to pass a bill in the fall session, to bring the bill in and have the debate at second reading, and the government would indicate: “At the end of the fall session we'd like to have second reading so that we can put the bill into committee in the intersession.” The committee then took a week, two weeks, three weeks—whatever it needed—in the intersession to go out and to travel Ontario in order to meet with people on the subject matter at hand in the bill.

What that allowed was sufficient time for second reading debate. Sometimes it wasn't a lot. Sometimes it was just part of the dealing that goes on with House leaders where you'd have a bill like this and you'd say, “We all agree so we'll each do our leads. I've got two speakers; he has three.” You would do that. The bill would then go off to committee.

But the important part is the committee was given the authority to travel in the intersession and to be able to travel to those people interested and able to give comment on the bill. And so the bill would go in the intersession. It would do one, two, three weeks. It would travel around the province. You would hear from the experts. You'd hear from the citizens on the bill. And then you actually took some time in clause-by-clause to thoughtfully go through what you had heard in order to be able to deal with it as far as how you amend the bill—so that when we went to clause-by-clause the government of the day would sit there, along with the opposition parties, and you would try to actually deal with the amendments in a way that made sense for the bill.

If the government is smart, I would argue, it looks at all amendments, no matter what side of the House they come from, and says, “Is this an amendment that helps or is this a political amendment?” And I understand if the government says it's a political amendment and this is an amendment that's fraught with politics of the opposition.

Mr. John Yakabuski: They can't be against them just because it came from someone else. That's what happens too often.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: That's my point. That's where I'm going with this. If the government sees the amendment as a political amendment, I'll understand why they'll do what they'll do. But a lot of times—and, I would argue, a majority of times—there are amendments that are put forward by members because they actually listen to the public and they say, “You know what? I think that person is right, so I asked my legislative people to draft up an

amendment in order to fix that part of the bill that is flawed.” You need some adequate time in clause-by-clause—not time-allocated—so that you can actually deal with amending the bill in such a way that clarifies the bill doing what needs to be done.

I would argue that in this particular bill we'd be able to actually deal with some of the regulatory issues ahead of time by saying what the intent of the regulation should be, at the very least, and not just leaving it blank for the minister to be able to do.

For example, under section 27, I wouldn't mind an amendment that says that some official within the MNR is going to be responsible for policing this bill and making sure there is enforcement. I don't want to see it privatized. I don't want to see it downloaded. But then what would happen is that the bill would come back in the next session—in that case, the spring session—it would have a little bit of time at third reading and it would be passed.

I would hope what the government is going to do here with the bill, when it's done second reading this spring, is that we actually allow the bill to travel in committee in the summer. It may not need long. As the critic, at this point I'm not being overwhelmed by a whole bunch of people writing in, saying, “You know, I would really like to present to this bill,” but I'm sure we're going to get some. But we have some sufficient amount of time given to being able to hear what the public has to say on this bill—and that we have sufficient time at clause-by-clause to be able to deal with whatever amendments need to be done in order to make the bill stronger. In the end, if we do our jobs here as legislators and if we do our jobs in committee well, this bill actually can be written in such a way and amended in such a way that it actually does what the bill is saying to do in the first place; that is, to find an effective strategy to deal with evasive species.

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I'll just say, Mr. Speaker, the bill is a step in the right direction. Our caucus is going to vote for this particular bill. I think I've laid out fairly succinctly, as best as I could in the hour that I had, what I see are the major problems with the bill. I look forward to the public coming to us and letting us know what we can do by way of amendment to this bill that would actually let it do what it has to do.

I just want to thank members for taking the time and listening to what I have to say, and I'm looking forward to their comments.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Questions and comments?

Ms. Eleanor McMahon: Merci, monsieur le Président. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to thank the member for Timmins–James Bay for his thoughtful articulations on this important piece of legislation.

Just by way of response, I'll say a couple of things. The member opposite talked about the fact that there is no invasive species listed in the bill. In fact, our government is going to put forward regulations to list those invasive species. In cases where a threat requires im-

mediate action, the minister would have the authority to temporarily designate a significant-threat invasive species. But in terms of broader consultation, this is going to occur via the EBR, the environmental and regulatory registries, before any species would be listed—this further to already significant consultation that has taken place.

That consultation, which has already taken place, coupled with the EBR responses—which I know will be significant, and that the member opposite will encourage his constituencies to participate in—will serve to guide us. Both those things will be strengthened by the scientists—numerous, I'm happy to say, in the ministry—extremely knowledgeable, that will serve to guide this legislation as it moves forward. I look forward to the constructive debate in the House on this important bill, given its importance to our economy, our social fabric and our day-to-day lives.

In my own riding of Burlington, we have the Cootes to Escarpment right next door, which has the largest number of endangered species anywhere in the country. That, of course, is right next door to the Hamilton harbour, which is in the midst of a very significant cleanup. We have the greenbelt just next door. I'm surrounded by provincial parks and significant green space. Tackling invasive species is going to be a very important issue for all of us to be thinking about and looking at.

Again, I thank the member opposite for his constructive comments. I look forward to discussing this further in committee.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further comments and questions?

Mr. John Yakabuski: I listened intently to my colleague from Timmins–James Bay on his hour-long address. That's a long time to be talking about something in this House, but he does it as well as anybody. He does like to talk, which I am not opposed to myself. But—

Mr. Gilles Bisson: You're not exactly shy on that point.

Mr. John Yakabuski: I do want to say that I agree with the member from Burlington that this is a very important piece of legislation. I wish the government had moved more quickly on this because this is a serious threat to, as she said, our environment and our economy. When your economy is threatened, you have to move quickly.

The world has shrunk. Trade has changed a lot of things. Most of it is very, very positive, but one of the things that has happened is that our world has shrunk, and species from other parts of the globe that have no natural predators here can be transferred to our environment, and they run amok because we don't have the natural predators that keep those populations in check. It's happening all across the globe. It's not just happening here; it's happening all across the globe. So some kind of legislation that gives us some teeth to deal with these invasive species is very, very necessary.

We do need to have the debate to make sure that we're covering the bases and that we're doing it right, and we get it right the first time. That is why this bill needs to get

through to committee, so that we can get the input from those stakeholders and those people that understand the implications and ramifications of this, or any other piece of legislation, better than we do ourselves, because they're on the ground every day. We may write the legislation and we may pass it here, but I think it's very important that we get the input from those stakeholders that understand it, quite frankly, better than we ever would.

We need to get this bill to committee. As my colleague from Timmins–James Bay said, the government has to have an open mind when we get to committee, and if there are constructive elements that can be addressed through amendment, don't be against them just because they're coming from the other side.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): I thank the member.

Further questions and comments?

Mr. Taras Natyshak: I'm pleased to comment on the one-hour lead that our House leader, Monsieur Bisson, gave on this bill. He brings a lot of institutional knowledge to this place and certainly has dealt within the realm of environmental protection throughout the years, so I would advise members of the government, particularly new members, to really heed some of his counsel and particularly some of his warnings.

The effectiveness of this bill is not guaranteed, there is no question. Whether it's a 100% locked-tight, well-nuanced bill, it will not eliminate invasive species as an entirety. We have to recognize that.

We also have to recognize that the provisions of constructing this bill through regulation really don't allow members of this Legislature to provide oversight. So as Monsieur Bisson suggested, when those regulations are finally drafted, they should come back to committee for us as members to be able to comment on them. It's something that should be a regular course of action in here, but unfortunately, it has not been so for quite some time through the measures that the government has enacted or used to push bills through this House.

He talked about section 27. I wasn't aware of that. That is quite frightening. It gives the minister extraordinary powers, should they designate a certain area with a threat of invasive species, to take any action: burn a plot of land, use chemicals that we may not even know of. This is far-reaching—overreaching, I would say—and something that we should take a very close look at, something that could potentially end up being a slippery slope and set a precedent for other areas or other jurisdictions.

Then something that he mentioned which I think is quite reasonable, something that I think Ontarians would appreciate, is that we travel this bill, that we would do wide consultation, broad consultation. It's something that affects the entire Great Lakes basin, as we see a continued presence of invasive species. They have lots of voice, they have concerns, and we should certainly give them the opportunity to do that.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): I thank the member from Essex.

Further questions and comments?

Mr. Yvan Baker: I'm pleased to speak and respond to some of the comments that have been made on this important piece of legislation. When I think about my community and how this touches Etobicoke Centre, I think about something called the lamprey eel which, back in the 1960s, we began to address as an invasive species. It really devastated a number of the fish that populate the Great Lakes, trout as an example. Key tributaries are where they were most prominent. We've been able to control that, and the impact of that not only for our wildlife but for our economy has been a positive one.

So when I think about this piece of legislation, I think about things like that. I think about the fact that this is a bill that will ensure that we do a much better job of assessing and preventing these types of species from ravaging our economy and ravaging our green spaces.

If this legislation is passed, Ontario will actually be the only jurisdiction in Canada that has stand-alone invasive species legislation. I mentioned the lamprey eel, but there are others that we need to be concerned about, like zebra mussels and the emerald ash borer. This costs our economy tens of millions of dollars each year. When we think about the Asian carp, they have the potential to do long-lasting damage to our environmental systems, impacting our \$2.2-billion recreational fishing industry in Ontario.

This is really a critical bill. I think it takes important steps to make sure that we address some of these invasive species. We know what the impact of invasive species can be on our communities, on our green spaces and on our economy. I would urge members from all sides of the House to come together and let's pass this bill so that we can enact it, move forward with it and reap the positive benefits as soon as possible.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): I thank the member from Etobicoke Centre.

Back to the member from Timmins–James Bay for final comments.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I want to thank all members for their comments. I just want to speak to the original comment by the member from—

Ms. Eleanor McMahon: Burlington.

Mr. Gilles Bisson:—Burlington. She talks about how the ability to comment will be by the EBR. The EBR and a legislative committee are two different things. The EBR is an opportunity for people to comment on the drafting of regulations, and then cabinet can decide whether to take those comments into consideration when doing the regulations. It's quite a different thing than an actual legislative committee that has the ability to have public hearings and actually put forward amendments that the government has to deal with, either by voting for or voting against.

I don't want to have to rely on the EBR as a way to deal with regulations. The point that I was trying to make in my speech was that there's a real problem here when we leave all of the details to regulation. It makes us vote on a bill that has a title and we really don't know what it's going to do in the end, as far as its effectiveness and

how it's going to be done and how it's going to be paid for.

That's why I argued that we should either put the details of that in the bill or, at the very least, we have to have a mechanism that, once the regulations are drafted by cabinet, those regulations have the ability to be called by a committee—to take a look at the package and, if necessary, re-engage the public in some way; that we're able to then, as a committee, vote on any amendments that are necessary when it comes to the draft regulations as presented. It just seems to me that in that way it's a much more transparent system and we actually end up in a way in which we engage the public, where they could have an opportunity to have a real say when it comes to the outcome of the legislation.

It's unfortunate that we find ourselves in this situation, because over the last 20-odd years, we have moved more and more towards the delegation of the authority of this House to cabinet. I just think it's a bad thing, considering the evasive species that lives on the other side of the House.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): That ends the debate for this morning. I'd like to thank all members for their contributions.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): This House stands recessed until 10:30.

The House recessed from 1012 to 1030.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Jim Wilson: Mr. Speaker, I want to congratulate page Aiden Campbell for being a page captain today and welcome his mother, LeAnne Campbell, who is with us in the public gallery.

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

Mr. Peter Tabuns: It's my pleasure to welcome back to the Legislature Bud Wildman, Ross McClellan and Richard Johnston, former inhabitants of this place.

Mr. Harinder S. Takhar: It is with great pleasure that I welcome Rachel Mathews from my riding of Mississauga–Erindale. She is seated in the members' east gallery. Rachel is the mother of Sarah John, who is a page captain today. Welcome to Queen's Park, Rachel, and congratulations to Sarah.

Ms. Sylvia Jones: Speaker, I would like you to join me in welcoming Chris Hamilton, Mark Broadhurst, Leslie Brams-Baker and Michelle Lefler to Queen's Park today. They all represent Mars Canada.

Mr. John Vanthof: I'd like to introduce Frances Cockburn. She's the mother of one of our page captains, Jessie Meanwell. She's joining us in the public gallery this morning.

Mr. Han Dong: It's my pleasure to welcome the family of today's page captain Caleb Woolcott: mother, Lynne Woolcott; father, Kevin Barrett; and grandfather Peter Woolcott. Welcome.

Mr. Ted Arnott: I want to welcome grade 10 students from Christ the King secondary school in Georgetown who are with us here today as well.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: I'm happy to welcome some family members who are here today in the members' west gallery. From Amherstburg and LaSalle I have Monsieur Alfred Roy; son épouse, Lorraine Roy; and my nephew Carson Reaume, who is starring as Jethro in the Mirvish production of the Heart of Robin Hood. I encourage everyone to go and check it out; I know a minister has.

Mr. Monte Kwinter: There's a group that's already in the building but they're not in the gallery yet. I would like to welcome Stephen Adler, the associate director from the Centre for Israel and Jewish Affairs; and the Diller Teen group from Israel. The Diller Teen Fellows Program is a UJA Federation of Greater Toronto premier leadership development program for Jewish teens in grades 10 and 11.

Hon. Jeff Leal: I have the great pleasure of introducing—they're going to be in the members' east gallery—representatives from a great Canadian company called Mars Inc.: Chris Hamilton, Mark Broadhurst, Leslie Brams-Baker and Michelle Lefler. I want to invite all members to a reception they're holding this evening in the legislative dining room between 5 and 7:30 p.m.—a great Canadian and Ontario company.

Hon. Reza Moridi: It's a great pleasure to welcome Felix Wagenfeld, a senior expert with the German Academic Exchange Service. Felix studied abroad here in Toronto 10 years ago. Please join me in welcoming Felix.

Mr. Arthur Potts: It's my pleasure to introduce Joseph Tilley from New Westminster, BC. He's in Ontario doing research for a book on Agnes Macphail. Today is Agnes Macphail Day, proclaimed in 1993. I'm delighted to have him here.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I have a little bit of housekeeping. In the members' west gallery, we have Ross McLean from Bellwoods in the 30th, 31st, 32nd and 33rd Parliaments; Richard Johnston, from Scarborough West, in the 31st, 32nd, 33rd and 34th Parliaments; and Bud Wildman, from Algoma, in the 30th to 36th Parliaments. Welcome and thank you for being here, gentlemen.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Sorry, Ross McClellan. I wasn't here yet.

Also, a small piece of housekeeping: One of our members has had a significant birthday. I would like to congratulate the member from York Centre, Monte, celebrating on Sunday his 84th birthday.

Applause.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): As he has reminded me from time to time, every day that he is here he sets another record.

Also, we have with us today—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): We have with us today—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I'll try for a third time.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): All right, let's get it all out now.

We have with us today, in the Speaker's gallery, Mr. Roberto Ubilla, the newly appointed consul general of the Republic of Chile at Toronto. Welcome and thank you for being here.

LEGISLATIVE PAGES

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Finally, I would ask our pages to assemble to be introduced. They are our new, freshly minted pages. We have with us Demily Bello Thibodeau from Algoma-Manitoulin; Alycia Berg from Cambridge; Aiden Campbell from Simcoe-Grey; Max Ciuffetelli-Parker from Etobicoke-Lakeshore; Thomas Dubois from Brant; Joe Fast from Ottawa South; Alysya Haji from Thornhill; Ian Harvey from Etobicoke Centre; Sarah John from Mississauga-Erindale; Cameron Johnson from Perth-Wellington; Japneet Kaur from Brampton-Springdale; Jessie Meanwell from Hamilton Centre; Ranen Oomen-Danckert from Dufferin-Caledon; Rahul Pandya from Huron-Bruce; Marin Papulkas from Oakville; Emma Patterson from Parkdale-High Park; Natasha Pelletier from St. Paul's; Kari Peltonen from Thunder Bay-Superior North; Danielle Peters from Don Valley East; Jade Proulx from Ottawa West-Nepean; Connor Tomaszewski from Wellington-Halton Hills; Cynthia Wan from Welland; and Caleb Woolcott from Trinity-Spadina. These are our pages.

Applause.

ORAL QUESTIONS

AUTOMOTIVE INDUSTRY

Mr. Jim Wilson: My question is for the Premier. Premier, as you know, as of last week General Motors confirmed that the Camaro will no longer be built in Oshawa. Ontario lost out to Lansing, Michigan just across the border. In response, all we've heard from your Minister of Economic Development are talking points about optimism. Premier, optimism alone doesn't secure jobs.

Can you tell us what your plan is to keep GM in Oshawa?

1040

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I know the Minister of Economic Development, Employment and Infrastructure is going to want to speak to this, but I would say, first of all, we're not going to apologize for being optimistic about the economy in Ontario. We are optimistic. We know the fact that our government has invested over \$850 million in the auto sector has leveraged \$11 billion in private sector investment. That's a very, very good

thing. Since the summer, Ontario has seen nearly \$4 billion in new auto investments.

What's happening is that the decisions we made in terms of the auto sector—decisions that the party opposite did not support—have actually borne fruit. The auto sector is recovering and we are very much a part of that recovery.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Jim Wilson: Back to the Premier: I'm a little baffled by that response. Maybe you haven't got it straight. Some 3,700 jobs hang in the balance.

Your economy is doing so well that you lost the Camaro. You didn't win a new contract with GM; it went right across the border to Lansing, Michigan. So I wouldn't be bragging about the economy, and I wouldn't be babbling on about the past either. Some 3,700 people—workers at GM—are looking for an answer about their futures and their future job prospects.

I'll give you an opportunity again: What concrete steps are you taking, other than being optimistic, to secure those jobs in Oshawa?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: As the member opposite full knows, this is not a new decision. Obviously, we're concerned when there's job loss. Every time there is a job loss in Ontario, we're concerned about that.

But we're also pleased and optimistic when there are job gains. March of this year, a partnership with Toyota Boshoku Canada to expand the Elmira manufacturing plant will create and sustain over 450 jobs; February 2015—just last month—Ford Oakville, 400 new jobs for the Edge facility; and last month as well, GM—the same company that the member opposite is talking about—\$560 million for the Ingersoll facility, which will sustain 3,000 jobs.

I think we do have to look at the overall auto sector story in Ontario, and it is a good one.

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

Mr. Jim Wilson: Back to the Premier: As you know, the GM commitments that were made during the bailout are set to expire in the next few months, right as production at the Oshawa plant comes to an end. GM hasn't committed to staying in Oshawa and, by your answers today, you're not committing to stay in Oshawa, but I'll give you a chance to do so.

Have you given up on Oshawa, or can you promise that they will be there for many years to come?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Economic Development.

Hon. Brad Duguid: Unlike the member opposite and his party, this government has been there to support the auto sector every step of the way. We're talking about a party that, during the depths of the recession, wanted to completely kiss off the auto sector. The quote from them is, "Let those plants close." They would have cost us 500,000 jobs across this province.

We're working hard with GM. We're working hard with our partners in labour. We're going to do everything we can to land a future mandate in Oshawa. We're opti-

mistic and we won't apologize for that. After \$4 billion of investment in this province since November, our auto sector is going in the right direction because we supported them during the recession. Thank God we didn't take your advice, which would have cost us 500,000 jobs directly—

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

Interjections.

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

New question.

WORKPLACE SAFETY AND INSURANCE BOARD

Mr. Randy Hillier: My question is to the Premier. I ask you this question today because in the last five years your government has gone through five labour ministers. I'm sure you have a far greater grasp on the WSIB portfolio than any of them, given that your chief of staff was once employed there.

Premier, are you aware of the existence of any slush funds at the WSIB, specifically ones that have existed for many years, despite explicit recommendations to shut those funds down?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Labour.

Hon. Kevin Daniel Flynn: The Workplace Safety and Insurance Board, I think all members know, plays a huge role in this province in ensuring that the workplaces and those workers who are injured at work get treated in the way they should.

The member's question—I don't know where it's going, Speaker. Certainly slush funds are not something that I deal with, and that I hope no member of this House deals with when it comes to any aspect of government in the province of Ontario, but I think that the people—

Interjections.

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

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The next comment will get warned.

Hon. Kevin Daniel Flynn: I think all members of this House understand that the Workplace Safety and Insurance Board has undergone some changes in the recent past. Those changes have all been positive. They have moved this board from a previous position where they were perhaps not able to fulfill their obligations to a point right now where they're extremely healthy, serving the workers of the province of Ontario and the employers of this province.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

Mr. Randy Hillier: Well, maybe they just don't want to talk about it.

Premier, there has been a fund that has handed out over a million dollars to the Ontario Federation of Labour every year. From what I can tell, there has never been any oversight of this fund whatsoever—no applications,

no reporting and zero value for money. Since 2003, the OFL has received \$12.3 million from this fund.

Premier, why does your minister hand over more than a million dollars a year with zero oversight and no transparency?

Hon. Kevin Daniel Flynn: The member will know that it's a partnership that exists in the province of Ontario. This government treats injured workers very, very seriously. This government treats accident prevention very, very seriously.

What that means in the province of Ontario is that we deal with a number of health and safety partners. We deal with business organizations. We deal with labour organizations. We treat them in a financially responsible manner, and also we treat them with respect.

Injured workers in the province of Ontario are served very, very well by the Workplace Safety and Insurance Board, and I'd be prepared to back them up any day of the week.

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

Mr. Randy Hillier: Well, it's good to hear that the minister wants to back them up, because nobody else does.

My question is very simple. This grant to the Ontario Federation of Labour has been audited, and it has explicitly been recommended by KPMG to be shut down, as it has absolutely no value for money for the taxpayers of Ontario.

Premier, it hasn't been shut down. I want to know why it hasn't been shut down. KPMG has told you that this program is worthless. It's just a slush fund for the OFL, and it's political pressures from your ministry that is keeping that slush fund going.

Hon. Kevin Daniel Flynn: Speaker, I'll let our partners decide what they think about that question.

What I can tell you about the financial operation of the WSIB is that, under Mr. Marshall's leadership, this board has made significant improvements to its unfunded liability. It was \$9 billion—

Interjections.

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

Finish, please.

Hon. Kevin Daniel Flynn: The WSIB unfunded liability has decreased by \$1.6 billion since December 31, 2013. What I would say is that we've done that as a result of working with business, working with labour and working with injured workers' groups in the province of Ontario to ensure that we're leaders in this regard.

The premise behind the honourable member's question is something that I simply do not agree with. I would ask him to bring me any other facts he has.

But, certainly, from my perspective, the relationship that we have with organized labour, and that the WSIB has with organized labour—

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

GOVERNMENT'S AGENDA

Ms. Catherine Fife: To the Premier: Last June, Don Drummond, the hand-picked Liberal cutting czar, went on TV to say that the Liberal plan would mean firing 100,000 people. How many people will the Premier be firing in this spring's budget?

1050

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Let me say to the member opposite that when she has an opportunity to read the budget, she will see that we are continuing to invest in the people of this province, to invest in their talent and their skills, to invest in infrastructure, to work in partnership with business and to create a dynamic business environment, and to set up a retirement security plan that will allow people to have more security when they retire. In fact, the plan that we ran on—in fact, the fiscal assumptions that that party ran on—are exactly what we are implementing right now.

Yes, we are being responsible and, yes, we have committed to eliminating the deficit by 2017-18. But we are not doing that by cutting and slashing. That's what the opposition party said they were going to do. We are making the investments that we know are going to lead to—

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

Ms. Catherine Fife: The Liberals seem to think that Mike-Harris-style cuts and privatized hydro is the only way to invest in Ontario. The Premier seems to think that you can either have public hydro companies or public transit. She doesn't believe that you can have both. But I know that she's wrong.

Just last year, the Auditor General found that \$8 billion was wasted on P3s. When the budget is introduced, the Premier will be insisting she needs to privatize hydro to pay for transit, but will she miraculously be able to find billions to waste on more sweetheart P3 deals?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Let's just step back from the premise of this question and make it clear that the reason we are able to make the investments we are making in transit, in roads, in bridges is that we have made some decisions, one of which is to review the assets that are owned by the people of Ontario and to make sure we can leverage those assets in order to invest in the infrastructure that is needed for the 21st century. Underlying that decision is the need to invest in transit and transportation infrastructure.

In fact, the plan that the party opposite ran on—the third party—was the plan that we had constructed, that we had developed, and it's the plan that we are implementing, including a review of—

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

Ms. Catherine Fife: Last April, the Premier of this province said, "We won't cut education, health care or social services," and yet somehow, here we are. The Liberals are cutting education, they're cutting health care, and they're cutting services.

Liberal incompetence and corruption shouldn't cost Ontarians. Can the Premier explain why she can always find the chequebook when she needs to bury a Liberal scandal, but that same chequebook is mysteriously missing when it comes to schools or child care?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): It's dangerously close to unparliamentary, and I'm going to remind you, in any other questions coming up, it better not get that close again.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I've known the member opposite since she was a school community adviser in Toronto. I know she understands how much money we have put into education. I know she understands that we continue to increase our education budgets. I know she also understands that school boards have to make local decisions.

In May 2014—I just want to make a comment on the member's quote—she said—

Interjections.

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

Finish, please.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: In terms of the decisions that we're having to make and the plan that they ran on, I'm going to quote CBC News from May 28, 2014: "Catherine Fife, the Ontario NDP candidate for Kitchener-Waterloo, says her party's proposed savings and accountability minister would look to find efficiencies in the health care and post-secondary education sectors in order to find \$600 million in annual savings."

That's more than we've chosen to do.

Interjections.

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

New question.

GOVERNMENT'S AGENDA

Ms. Catherine Fife: Again to the Premier: I don't have to find that money. The Auditor General found that money for you, and it's \$8 billion.

The Liberal government claims that the cupboard is empty, and the only solution is to fire people, cut services and sell off even more of the hydro system to Bay Street speculators.

I think we can agree that there is a problem with the books. It's Liberal incompetence, pure and simple. Wasting \$1 billion on gas plants, \$1 billion on eHealth, hundreds of millions on Ornge and a whopping \$8 billion on sweetheart deals for private developers will do that. That's what happens. It will create a problem with the books. But the good news is that there are solutions, Premier, like stopping P3s, closing HST loopholes or cracking down on millionaire CEOs in the public sector.

Is the Premier going to keep cutting schools and firing nurses so that she can afford to blow billions on P3s and corporate HST giveaways?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: You know, Mr. Speaker, what's interesting is, if we look across the world really,

we look at jurisdictions that are building infrastructure, we look at jurisdictions—

Mr. John Yakabuski: Look across the world. No other government is under more investigation.

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

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: —making sure that they have the ability to upgrade the infrastructure that will allow them to compete in the 21st century. You will see governments that are working with the private sector.

Now, I know the NDP basically doesn't want to change anything. They don't want to review the assets. They don't want to change the alcohol distribution system. They don't want to build transit and transportation infrastructure. They basically want to maintain the status quo, as though that will make us competitive in the 21st century. Well, it won't, Mr. Speaker.

We're going to be competitive, we're going to move ahead and we're going to do that by making the decisions that will allow us to invest in this province.

Interjections.

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

Supplementary?

Ms. Catherine Fife: Last June, the Premier of this province said, "Will we implement a program of layoffs? Absolutely not."

Fifty nurses are being fired at CHEO; 42 nurses in Sudbury; 22 nurses in Cambridge; 15 nurses in Leamington; 18,000 nursing hours in New Liskeard; 15 PSWs in Guelph; 38 full-time equivalents in Timmins; seven full-time equivalents in Ottawa. I would call that a program of layoffs. What does the Premier call it?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I call it not even half the story because, as those changes are happening, there is hiring going on. We are investing in the health care system; more than \$21 billion in health care infrastructure; 23—

Interjection.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Twenty-three new hospitals have been built or are under way since 2003; 5,000 doctors since 2003 and 24,000 nurses.

Is the health care system in a transition? Absolutely. Are we moving more care into the community? Absolutely. Have the funding formulas changed for hospitals? Yes, they have, but that doesn't mean there are fewer people in the system. That means we're delivering services in ways that people demand and need, and improving service in health care.

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

Ms. Catherine Fife: You know, Premier, the people of this province aren't interested in your stories. They're interested in services. When a senior wonders why they can't get care from a nurse, the Premier will say it's because the well is dry. When a student is wondering why their neighbourhood school is closing, the Premier will say it's because the well is dry. When a parent has to quit their job because their affordable child care space is cut,

the Premier will say it's because the well is dry. But when a Liberal-friendly construction firm shows up looking for a P3 contract with plenty of fat, the Liberals get out the chequebook, and when there is a Liberal scandal—

Hon. Brad Duguid: Give us one example of that ever happening.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Minister of Economic Development, come to order.

Ms. Catherine Fife:—let the good times roll.

Will the Premier do the right thing? Will she clean up the corruptions and scandals—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock. The Minister of Economic Development chose to continue heckling after I said to stop. So now he's got two.

Please finish.

Ms. Catherine Fife: So the question: Will the Premier do the right thing? Will you clean up the mess that is this government, address the scandals and start putting the people of this province ahead of Liberal friends?

Interjections.

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

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Order. Premier?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Underpinning the question that the member of the third party is asking is, will we stop changing things? Will we stop transforming government? Will we stop building? Will we stop investing in education so that we can have a 21st-century education system for our kids? Will we stop investing in transforming the health care system? No, Mr. Speaker, we won't. We are going to continue those investments. We are going to continue to work with our health care providers, with our educators, to make the changes that are necessary.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Deputy House leader.

1100

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: The third party doesn't believe we should be investing in transit. They don't believe we should be investing in transportation infrastructure. They don't believe we should change anything. We do not ascribe to that belief system. We believe there must be change, and we believe that the investments we are making right now are necessary for the 21st-century economy.

PREMIER'S RECORD

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: My question is to the Premier. Good morning, Premier.

Yesterday, her government called anti-SLAPP legislation for debate. Ontarians do see through this, in the face of a SLAPP suit initiated by the Premier herself against

myself and the member for Niagara West–Glanbrook. She's suing me—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Order.

Please finish.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: She's suing me for comparing her to Richard Nixon.

But Richard Nixon's tapes had an 18-and-a-half-minute gap. The Pat Sorbara and Gerry Lougheed tapes in the Sudbury by-election scandal are there for the whole province to hear or listen to. In fact, the Sorbara-Lougheed tapes are the subject of not one, but two criminal investigations.

Now that the Premier has outpaced the former Premier, Dalton McGuinty, in criminal investigations into her office, the Premier's office, doesn't she think it's time to stop muzzling the opposition and withdraw that lawsuit?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: The lawsuit to which the member opposite refers is the one in which I have obviously—

Interjections.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I have kept it in place, Mr. Speaker, because the comments made by the members from Niagara West–Glanbrook and Nepean–Carleton were untrue and they were without evidence.

I am always, and have been, willing to debate the truth. I was always willing to debate the relocations of the gas plants. That's fair, but absolutely unfounded, baseless allegations are not.

All I'm saying is that I'm always willing to debate the truth, but not unfounded allegations.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Let's debate the truth right here. The biggest threat to the Premier's reputation is she herself. Her debt-bed conversion to selling off Hydro, selling beer and wine in grocery stores, and eliminating 100,000 public service jobs, like nurses at CHEO and education workers at the Toronto District School Board, are everything she campaigned against, everything she told this assembly she would fight against if she became Premier.

Her support for anti-SLAPP legislation flies in the face of everything she has done in the last year. There are now four criminal investigations into her government—two into her own office—since she initiated this latest SLAPP suit. She has two new scandals in SAMS and social housing. All of that is fact.

All I'm saying here today, Premier, is do the right thing. Allow the opposition to question you without any repercussions. Withdraw that suit and do the right thing for the people of this province.

Interjections.

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

Premier?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Mr. Speaker, when I took that step, I did not take it lightly. My only contention is that we should be dealing in the truth—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Member from Leeds–Grenville, come to order.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: The member opposite knows full well that I spent day after day after day—

Mr. Steve Clark: You didn't want the truth.

Hon. James J. Bradley: I'm calling Tony Clement.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Leeds–Grenville, too, continued after I asked him to stop. He's got two.

The deputy House leader is now warned.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Who's next? Premier?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Mr. Speaker, I spent day after day here in this House and in front of committee, answering questions about the gas plant relocations—

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Good old Watergate Wynne.

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

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: All I'm suggesting is that we should deal in the truth and not in allegations.

In terms of the decisions that we have made since the election and the plan that we're implementing, it's exactly what I ran on. It's exactly what I said I was going to do. We said we were going to review the assets. We said we were going to balance the budget by 2017-18. We said we were going to invest in transit and transportation infrastructure—none of which they agreed with, Mr. Speaker, but we are implementing the plan that we ran on.

BY-ELECTION IN SUDBURY

Mr. Gilles Bisson: My question is to the Premier. Premier, it's pretty clear and categoric when you listen to Pat Sorbara on the tapes with Mr. Olivier what it is that she was doing. She was offering Mr. Olivier a job or an appointment in order to have him stand down so that he could nominate the chosen candidate in Sudbury.

So my question is this: Was the Premier in the room when Pat Sorbara made that phone call?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: There's an investigation going on. That investigation is not going on in this House. That investigation is happening outside of this Legislature. I will work with the authorities, Mr. Speaker. I have said that all along. I will continue to say that and I will do that. That investigation is taking place outside the Legislature.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Well, 135 questions and we still don't have an answer to the basic questions. So I ask the Premier the question. Pat Sorbara made a phone call to Mr. Olivier. She was categoric in saying, "Please stand aside and nominate our chosen candidate, and if you do that, we'll give you a job or an appointment." My question to you was a simple one: Did you or did you not be party to that discussion by being in the room when Pat Sorbara made the phone call; yes or no?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: When I say that I am going to co-operate and have been co-operating with the authorities, I'm talking about the authorities whose responsibility is to conduct the investigation. And with all due respect to the member opposite, he is not one of those people, and that investigation is not taking place in this House. It is taking place outside this House, and that is where I will be working with the authorities, Mr. Speaker.

RING OF FIRE

Mr. Glenn Thibeault: My question is for the Minister of Northern Development and Mines.

Mr. Speaker, over the past—

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Is it about Pat Sorbara?

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

Carry on.

Mr. Glenn Thibeault: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Over the past year, there was news of Cliffs resources moving away from their investments in eastern Canada as they restructured their operations and planned to sell assets. Some of those assets are in the Ring of Fire.

Yesterday, we heard that Noront Resources had entered into an agreement to acquire Cliffs resources' assets in the Ring of Fire. The news that the company's assets are being purchased to be developed is big news for northern Ontario and for our province as a whole.

Can the minister please inform the House of this recent news coming out of the Ring of Fire?

Hon. Michael Gravelle: I want to thank the hard-working member from Sudbury for that question.

Certainly, Mr. Speaker, I think it's very good news that Noront Resources has entered into an agreement to acquire Cliffs' assets in the Ring of Fire.

Applause.

Hon. Michael Gravelle: Thank you very much.

As everyone knows, Noront has been working continuously for some time to develop their Eagle's Nest nickel project in the Ring of Fire. We, quite frankly, expect that they will do the same with these chromite properties that they will be acquiring. And with Noront now acquiring those, obviously when the court approval has to go through—when they do acquire those properties, essentially they'll be affirming their commitment to the Ring of Fire and validating this government's commitment to developing this region. We very much recognize the tremendous potential of the Ring of Fire, and now it's very, very clear that industry does as well.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Glenn Thibeault: Thank you to the minister for his response.

This investment by industry affirms the message that I and this government have been sharing with my community on the incredible mineral potential right here in Ontario. I know we're a world leader in mining, but what is just as important to understand is that Ontario is a world leader in mineral financing—

Mr. Victor Fedeli: We used to be a world leader in mining.

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

Mr. Glenn Thibeault: Anyone who spent time at PDAC this year wouldn't be surprised to know that more global mining projects get financed in Toronto than any other financial centre in the world.

I understand that Noront has worked to secure these assets with the support of another company, Franco-Nevada. Having these two companies investing in northern Ontario holds very exciting potential for northern Ontario and Ontario. Will the minister explain what this investment means to the province?

Hon. Michael Gravelle: It's very well put by the member for Sudbury in terms of Ontario being such an attractive destination for mining investment. There's no doubt about it. This particular proposed acquisition confirms what we've been saying all along: that the business case for the Ring of Fire remains incredibly strong.

1110

This investment by Noront Resources—I should say, I recently joined Noront at the Prospectors and Developers Association conference when they received the 2015 environmental and social responsibility award, a pretty special award for them as well.

When they joined in a partnership with Franco-Nevada—Franco-Nevada being one of the world's top mining royalty firms—that demonstrates that the significant potential of the Ring of Fire continues to be a very attractive investment.

It's important to note as well that there's interest from many companies. Over 20 companies have got claims in the region to develop the significant resources in the Ring of Fire.

We continue to be very committed to it. We're excited about this investment.

SKILLS TRAINING

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: My question today is for the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities.

Minister, for many months now, Durham College has been trying to partner with the construction industry to build a multi-million dollar tower crane training program facility and achieve training status at Durham College. I understand that MTCU staff, Durham College, RESCON and other partners are all prepared to go ahead. Only your office has not signed off.

When can we expect you to make a positive decision and support a private-public partnership that will train additional tower crane operators for our construction industry?

Hon. Reza Moridi: I want to thank the member for that question. Our government is committed to skills training in the province of Ontario. That's why we created the College of Trades a few years ago, and the college is making great progress in terms of serving the public as well as serving the tradespeople.

In terms of the question, we are working very closely with the training service providers. We have a number of training service providers across the province where they train skilled people for our province of Ontario in 152 areas of skilled trades. We will continue to monitor the supply of skilled tradespeople in Ontario and we will continue to work with the training centres across the province of Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: Thank you very much. You really didn't dwell on my question very much, Minister.

Minister, we know you are under pressure from the hoisting engineers not to grant Durham College tower crane training status, but look at the facts: The proposal will cost MTCU no additional money and it is supported by your own staff. No one should have a monopoly on training, including labour groups.

The private-public partnership will create competition. It would increase qualified operators working under safer conditions. Durham College has a remarkable record on all of its training programs.

Everyone is onside to get started on this facility, including the PC caucus. Will you do the right thing, immediately show leadership, approve the Durham College proposal and quit playing politics with a decision that is actually a no-brainer decision?

Hon. Reza Moridi: I thank the member for that question.

We have 24 community colleges across the province of Ontario. They are great partners in terms of skills training in the province of Ontario, along with a number of training centres which are run by various groups across the province of Ontario.

Actually, this afternoon, I'll be meeting with the president of Durham College to discuss this matter.

As I said earlier, we keep a very close eye on and monitor the supply and training of skilled tradespeople for the province of Ontario, not only in that particular field but in every one of those 152 skilled trades areas in the province of Ontario.

EDUCATION FUNDING

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: My question is to the Premier. Yesterday, your Minister of Education said that funding cuts to schools were "preposterous," but behind closed doors the Liberals are saying the exact opposite. Internal documents show that schools face cuts of up to 2% under the Liberals' next budget. That means cuts to special education and ESL programs for the most vulnerable kids. It means more school closures and it means job cuts for education workers.

When will the Premier stand up and finally admit that she wants to cut 2%, or up to \$500 million, from schools across the province?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Just to repeat what the Minister of Education has said repeatedly: Our government has increased school funding to about \$22.5 billion this year. We continue to increase funding. That's a 56.5% increase since 2003.

That's in the face of declining enrolment. Not only have we increased funding, but we've actually increased per pupil funding when there are fewer students in the system.

We have done that. We will continue to increase funding to make sure that boards have the resources that they need, but those local decisions are just that. They have to be made locally. That's why school boards exist. I believe in school boards. I believe that trustees have a very important role to play, and that role is to make those local decisions that are in the best interests of the kids in their communities.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: Premier, I'd like to point out that, because of Liberal waste and scandal, and because of chronic underfunding of education, you've forced trustees to close schools.

Under the Education Act, the minister has a responsibility to close the gaps in student achievement, but Liberal cuts to education will only make those gaps grow even wider. The TDSB is already cutting 50 special education teachers and support staff because of Liberal cuts. That means larger class sizes and less support for the most vulnerable kids.

Across the province, \$500 million in cuts will pull the rug out from underneath students in every community. How can this government defend cuts to education that fly in the face of its responsibility to students?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: As we continue to increase funding across the province, we will work with boards to make sure that they are able to make the decisions that are in the best interests of students. That includes decisions around consolidation of schools.

The fact is that we have built 725 new schools in this province—

Miss Monique Taylor: Yes, but how many did you close?

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Member from Hamilton Mountain.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: —and more than 700 additions and renovations.

If the member opposite from Hamilton, I think, who was heckling understood—the fact is that populations change, and that school boards have to adapt to those populations and have to make decisions to deliver the best program to students. Sometimes that means renovating a school. Sometimes it means consolidating two schools. Sometimes it means closing one school and building a new school. All of those options are things that school boards look at, and that's how you get the best program delivery at the local level for students.

LABOUR DISPUTE

Mrs. Laura Albanese: My question is for the Minister of Labour. Speaker, the workers of Crown Metal Packaging have been on strike for 18 months, walking the picket line for two winters now in the bitter cold. Many of these workers live in my riding of York South-Weston.

The last time I asked the minister a question on this issue, he made it clear that the ongoing labour disruption at Crown Metal was concerning to him. The minister stated here in this House that the dispute does not follow the norm in terms of labour relations in our province, and he strongly urged both parties to go back to the table and negotiate a fair deal.

Mr. Speaker, through you to the minister: What are you doing as the Minister of Labour to get to the bottom of this matter?

Hon. Kevin Daniel Flynn: Speaker, on this side of the House we believe—and I think all members do—that the best deals we can get in this are negotiated at the bargaining table through collective bargaining. The Ministry of Labour provides assistance. We provide conciliation assistance. We provide mediation assistance when the parties ask us to intervene in that regard. We have excellent conciliators and excellent mediators.

Sometimes, though, the relationship between those parties breaks down and we need further action. This is what I think has happened at Crown Metal. We supervised the last-offer vote, by request of the employer, just last year. The employees overwhelmingly rejected that offer.

Now, after very, very careful consideration, I've taken the rare step of announcing that we're appointing an industrial inquiry commission, led by the very well-respected Morton Mitchnick, to inquire into how to resolve the current work stoppage that we're seeing at Crown Metal. I think this is an unusual move; under the circumstances, though, I think it's the right move.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

Mrs. Laura Albanese: I want to thank the minister for that answer, but the employees at Crown Metal need answers sooner rather than later. They've been out on the lines, as I mentioned earlier, for 18 months. They are tired of walking the lines and chanting when no one seems to be listening, so we need to let them know that we are listening. It's time that the workers know that our government has their backs, and that we won't let their struggle go unnoticed.

1120

Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Labour has said that he has appointed Morton Mitchnick as the head of the industrial inquiry commission. Will the minister please explain to this House what the industrial inquiry commission is and what he plans to accomplish through it?

Hon. Kevin Daniel Flynn: Thanks to the member for that very fine question. The Labour Relations Act in this province grants few special powers to the Minister of Labour to intervene when we're having a labour dispute. Under section 37 of the act, I've appointed an industrial inquiry commission.

As I said, it's being led by the very well respected Morton Mitchnick. He's going to look into and report back on the dispute. He's going to bring forward some recommendations as to how he sees us being able to move forward. He has previously served in the role as chair of the OLRB. He has been a panel arbitrator in a

wide variety of sectors across this continent. The industrial inquiry commissioner will have three weeks to consult with the parties involved. He'll report back to me within 14 days of completion.

Speaker, I've got full confidence in the abilities of Mr. Mitchnick. I think he's going to provide sound, reasonable advice. It's essential to understand the best deals are made at the table. I remain very hopeful—

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

MILTON COURTHOUSE

Mr. Ted Arnott: My question is for the Attorney General. Why is the government dragging its feet on the approval of a new courthouse in Halton region?

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: I thank you for this question. I know that you have been asking me, and many of the members on my side too, about this new courthouse. It's a priority for this government.

I have been to Milton to visit the courthouse there. I know that we need a new courthouse. It's a priority, again I'm saying, but we'll have to wait and see, with the next budget.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Ted Arnott: The urgent need for a new courthouse in Halton region was covered in a big article in the Toronto Star on January 23. I actually toured the Milton courthouse last September to see for myself, and simply put, the existing court facility in Milton is aging, overcrowded and inadequate in terms of security and privacy.

I've written to the Attorney General numerous times and spoken to her numerous times about this problem. I also asked for a briefing for the Halton-area MPPs from the AG's staff on the process for new courthouse approvals. We attended that briefing on December 2, and we were led to believe that a new Halton courthouse was indeed a priority, as the minister just said today. But just weeks later, the government announced an addition to the courthouse in Brampton, and no mention was made of the need in Halton region.

My question for the Attorney General is quite simple: When will you announce approval for a new Halton courthouse?

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: Again, yes, there are quite a few requests on this side of the House. The members on my side are asking me on a regular basis about the new courthouse. Yes, I am working with the judiciary. I'm working with the lawyers' association. I've been there, visiting. There is need.

The number one priority that is going forward is here in Toronto, but the next one, Milton—it's a growing area, and the decision on where the courthouse will be built is not made yet. But I know that there is much need there, and thank you for asking the question again.

AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: My question is to the Premier. The Liberals have decided to ignore families in the city

by cutting \$86 million from social housing this year alone. That's what the Liberals are telling Toronto. They're telling them: Forget about fixing the backlog for repairs, forget about easing the strain on emergency shelters, and worst of all, forget about the 87,000 families who are desperately waiting for affordable housing—the worst in Ontario's history.

Speaker, does the Premier have any clue what her cuts to social housing will actually mean for struggling families in Toronto?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing.

Hon. Ted McMeekin: I appreciate the question from the member opposite. She has a well-earned reputation for being a great advocate in Toronto, especially on the social housing front. So, thank you for that.

I just want to go and correct the impression, though. There has been no cut to social housing in Toronto. In fact, the redevelopment of Regent Park and the legacy of hundreds of homes connected with the Pan Am Games augurs very, very well.

What the member opposite, I think, is referring to is the end of the Toronto pooling agreement. Toronto was projecting a shortfall this year of some \$86 million, and they may have decided to tag that to something; I don't know. But that has been offset by the uploading we've gone through. In fact, provincial support of Toronto has increased by almost 700% since 2003.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Answer.

Hon. Ted McMeekin: Since 2003, some \$600 million-plus has been provided.

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

Hon. Ted McMeekin: The total provincial assistance—

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

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: Mr. Speaker, back to the Premier: The mayor of Toronto, John Tory, and the entire city council would beg to differ with that response. The Liberals can talk about being progressive, but no progressive government would cut \$86 million from Toronto's social housing budget. Over five years, the Liberal cuts will mean a half-billion-dollar funding gap, leading to service cuts and even longer wait-lists for affordable housing in the city, which now runs between 10 and 12 years. Even more families will be left waiting just to get the housing they can afford.

Again to the Premier: How can the Premier defend such deep, real cuts to social housing?

Hon. Ted McMeekin: I'd like to elaborate a little bit further on our relationship with Toronto. In 2015, the total benefit of provincial uploads for Toronto is estimated to be \$460 million, or about 12% of the residential tax base.

I don't know if the member opposite recalls this, but I will remind her, if she doesn't: Ontario has already forgiven the outstanding Toronto debenture loan of some \$230 million. We're going out of our way to not only

reverse the downloading of the previous government but to work with Mayor Tory and his council to, as adequately as we can, do an even better job on the social housing front.

CONSUMER PROTECTION

Mr. Peter Z. Milczyn: My question is to the Minister of Government and Consumer Services. I recently saw a very disturbing story on the CBC show *Go Public* about a senior citizen who was misled by a door-to-door salesman peddling furnaces. This senior citizen signed an agreement to rent a furnace—an agreement that she did not understand. As a result, she was charged exorbitant fees.

Unfortunately, this is not an isolated incident in this province. Many Ontarians will sign contracts they don't understand, will be pressured into signing contracts for services they don't necessarily need and be charged significantly higher prices for those services as a result. As the company pushing this contract would not address the problem with this senior, she had to go to the media.

The Minister of Government and Consumer Services has been in touch with officials at the CBC, with this senior citizen and with the company.

Could the minister please inform the House as to what steps his ministry has taken—

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

Hon. David Oraziatti: Thank you, Speaker. I want to thank the member from Etobicoke–Lakeshore for his timely question and his consumer advocacy. You can see that he's passionate about the issue.

I'm pleased that the company has agreed to replace the individual's furnace and adjust the payments accordingly. Prior to this incident, our ministry had already placed the company on the Consumer Beware List, which alerts consumers about organizations with poor business practices. In fact, through our ministry, we're monitoring these businesses, and this particular one had about 92 different complaints, mostly for misrepresentation.

We've taken steps to protect Ontarians and consumers from predatory door-to-door practices in passing the Stronger Protection for Ontario Consumers Act in December 2013, which was well received in this Legislature. The legislation addresses door-to-door sales for water heater rentals, which was a top complaint, requiring a 20-day cooling-off period before entering into the final stage of the agreement, demanding a plain-language contract as well as requiring a call-back to consumers.

1130

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Peter Z. Milczyn: I want to thank the minister for updating us on the situation that was reported on the CBC's *Go Public*, and for his ministry's proactive approach to the problematic ramifications of these kinds of door-to-door sales.

I know door-to-door sales have been an ongoing concern for residents in Etobicoke–Lakeshore as well as

throughout the province, and they present really terrible moments of intense pressure, sometimes on the most vulnerable residents. I look forward to seeing the implementation of stricter door-to-door regulations coming into effect next month.

Our government has a history of exploring ways to improve conditions for vulnerable residents, and I'm pleased that the minister is raising this important issue and has acted to resolve this accordingly.

Minister, can you please provide advice to Ontarians on how they can better protect themselves from aggressive, high-pressure door-to-door sales tactics?

Hon. David Oraziatti: Thank you—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock. I did stop the clock. I'd like to give all members a reminder that when you get warned, the next step is to step out. I just thought I'd remind people.

Hon. David Oraziatti: Thanks, Speaker.

I just want to remind all folks that we require a cooling-off period for sales or rentals of any heating device. This means a minimum 10-day window to reflect on his or her decision.

Secondly, I want to encourage all consumers to make sure that they understand which company the salesperson represents. Local utility companies, municipalities, government agencies and regulatory bodies do not sell door to door, so anyone trying to present themselves as such is misleading.

Ontarians should never give out their private information by showing their utility bills or personal identification, and as part of any consideration, consumers should check the Consumer Beware List.

If any Ontarian feels pressured or taken advantage of by these unscrupulous practices, they should report it to Consumer Protection Ontario, where it will be followed up on.

Awareness is the starting point of any major transaction, and we're working hard to ensure that Ontarians ask the right questions.

ROAD SAFETY

Mr. Michael Harris: My question is to the Minister of Transportation. Minister, yesterday at committee, we saw government members throw up roadblocks to enhanced road safety on your own distracted driving legislation. We saw government members balking at giving opposition members a chance to even discuss one of the 34 amendments being proposed to strengthen the legislation. I find that difficult to understand, Minister.

But what I find even more difficult to understand is why your own parliamentary secretary voted down a specific section of your own bill that will impact enhanced impaired driving penalties. Minister, can you explain what's going on here?

Hon. Steven Del Duca: I always welcome the opportunity to stand in my place in this Legislature and to talk about the importance of road safety, and particularly Bill 31, which is the bill that that member is referencing.

Just to remind everyone—and I know this was dealt with at committee yesterday and continues to be dealt with at committee—this is a bill that, for the very first time, will ensure that we have drug-impaired sanctions included in legislation here in the province of Ontario. It will increase the fines, penalties and sanctions for distracted driving.

Interjection.

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

Hon. Steven Del Duca: It does contain a number of other provisions.

I was thrilled, in fact, because at both first and second reading, it was a bill that enjoyed unanimous support in this Legislature. I know members on all sides of this House, representing communities right across this province, understand the importance of us moving forward with these measures so that we can continue to be a province that has such a strong track record for road and highway safety.

I think it's important for the committee to continue to do its work to get the bill back here for third reading so we can pass it.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Michael Harris: Back to the minister: Minister, we want to make Ontario roads safer. That's why we, and the NDP, put forth a series of worthy amendments to enhance road safety—for instance, to legislate demerit points for distracted driving, to limit window tinting—a suggestion moved forward by the Ottawa Police Service—and to improve medical review of licences. Again, we want to make Ontario roads safer. Yet your members are voting down sections of your own bill, and you're not even willing to listen to opposition calls for enhanced safety amendments.

Minister, your Premier has called for partnership, not partisanship. Which is it for you?

Hon. Steven Del Duca: Well, Speaker, I'm not going to take advantage of the opportunity provided to me with that last comment, because it's important for me to focus on road safety. I know that the committee that's reviewing Bill 31 will continue over the course of this week and the next number of days to do its work, and that committee will do the extraordinary job that it continues to do.

But I want to go back to the importance of making sure that Bill 31 becomes—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Lanark, second time.

Hon. Steven Del Duca: I appreciate the member in this particular circumstance bringing forward his support for our desire to make sure that our roads and highways remain safe.

I'm going to let that committee continue to do its work, and I'm happy to work with that member and other members on all sides of this House to make sure that we continue to have the safest roads and highways, as we have consistently for the last 13 years, and are first or second in North America for road user safety.

GOVERNMENT ANTI-RACISM PROGRAMS

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: My question is for the Premier. Premier, I'm sure all members will agree it is always a privilege to rise and speak from this place in one of the most diverse cities in the history of the world, within the most diverse province of this country.

This past Saturday was the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, where we are reminded that not only does systemic racism continue to exist elsewhere, it persists here as well. Income inequality, unemployment and precarious employment continue to disproportionately affect racialized communities in the province.

Will the Premier commit today to establishing an anti-racism directorate that will speak to issues of racial inequality?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I appreciate the question from the member opposite. There are many, many ways, I would suggest, across government that we are working to increase equality, to increase equity.

It's interesting, Mr. Speaker. When I came into office, and when I was made Minister of Education in 2006, I discovered that the word "equity" had been expunged from all ministry documents by the previous government, and I worked very, very hard to put in place a new policy. That's when we developed the equity and inclusive education policy, which later became the body of legislation that has required that the education system basically grapple with these issues.

So, Mr. Speaker, whether it's labour policies or whether it's through education policies, our government has worked very, very hard to make sure that people are treated fairly no matter their background.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: Speaker, the NDP government of Ontario first established an anti-racism secretariat to address persistent racial inequalities and inequities in our province. Unfortunately, this position was cut by the Conservatives, and the Liberals passed legislation in 2006; nine years later, they have failed to establish a new anti-racism secretariat.

Will the Premier commit today to strike a task force that will examine issues of systemic racism in the province and create a new anti-racism secretariat?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Again, I appreciate the question from the member opposite. This is something that I have given a fair bit of thought to, because it is an issue that's very, very important to me. If you know and recognize the people in this caucus, you'll understand that it's important to this whole caucus that we deal with this issue.

What I know is that as public policy evolves, there are different ways of dealing with issues. I believe that when the NDP government had that secretariat in place, that was a very important thing to do. But I believe today what's important is that we deal with these issues across government; in every single ministry, in every single

policy, we make sure that we put that lens on that ensures equity and that we ask the questions of our policy to make sure that those policies are going to promote equity in the province.

SERVICES FOR THE DEVELOPMENTALLY DISABLED

Ms. Daiene Vernile: My question is for the Minister of Community and Social Services. Minister, yesterday I had the pleasure of joining you in my riding of Kitchener Centre to announce a very important update on direct funding targets for people who are living with developmental disabilities. As part of the \$810-million developmental services investment strategy in our 2014 budget, your ministry committed to eliminating existing wait-lists for people who are in great need of direct funding. As you know, Minister, people who are living with developmental disabilities, their families and front-line workers are telling us that this funding helps them to make individual choices in learning how to live independently.

So, Mr. Speaker, could the minister please share with us the progress that is being made on this funding wait-list?

Hon. Helena Jaczek: Thank you to the member for Kitchener Centre for the question.

I was happy to have the member with me at KW Habilitation Services yesterday for some remarkable news. As of February, 2015, 14,000 people now have new direct funding to purchase supports and services. That is 14,000 more children and adults since the 2014 budget. This includes approved funding for 6,000 adults with a developmental disability through Passport, and 8,000 children with a physical or developmental disability through Special Services at Home. Moreover, we have eliminated the 2014 wait-list for Special Services at Home in just eight months—well ahead of the two years in our 2014 budget commitment.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Daiene Vernile: Minister, we were able to witness first-hand a program called LEG Up! where adults with developmental disabilities are learning skills that are getting them job-ready. We watched a class on social skills development, and there are also classes on computer training and food preparation. This very important programming is through the Passport funding.

While all of this is very good news, the developmental services sector has been in very serious need of investment and transformation in other areas for some time. The select committee on developmental disabilities identified other concerns, including the funding assessment process, residential services and the safety of some living options.

Mr. Speaker, how are the minister and her staff responding to all of these other concerns?

Hon. Helena Jaczek: The member does raise some very important points. There are serious concerns facing the developmental services sector in Ontario, and it will continue to undergo significant transformation to meet

growing and changing needs in order to be able to offer the supports that individuals and their families deserve and need. We are continuing to make progress.

Since budget 2014, 525 adults have now received new residential supports as we move toward our commitment of 1,400 new urgent residential supports over four years. Moreover, my ministry is working with community partners to address the large residential services need. This includes the work of the developmental services housing task force, which this month launched a call for proposals on innovative housing solutions.

As I made the commitment to the select committee on developmental disabilities last July when it reported its findings, we are working very hard and we're making significant progress.

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

The House recessed from 1143 to 1500.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Hon. Michael Coteau: It's my pleasure to welcome my good friend Sasha Pessos. Sasha, stand up and show them. He's here today to celebrate Greek Independence Day and the flag-raising. He happened to bring his father with him; Nick Pessos is joining us at the Legislature today.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

AGNES MACPHAIL

Mr. Bill Walker: I rise in the House today to recognize the many constituents in my riding of Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound who will be marking, this week, the 125th anniversary of the birthday of Agnes Campbell Macphail.

As some members may know, Agnes Macphail was born on March 24, 1890, in Proton township in Grey county, known today as Agnes Macphail country. Agnes and her family lived in a three-room log cabin on a 100-acre farm near Hopeville. Sometime later the Macphails moved to Artemesia township—which is also in my riding—where Agnes later worked as a schoolteacher.

As my constituents and those around Ontario gather to honour Agnes's birth, they'll celebrate her life accomplishments that helped to shape our history, such as being the first Canadian woman elected to the House of Commons in Ottawa in 1921 as a member of the Progressive Party of Canada for the Grey Southeast riding. She was re-elected in the 1925, 1926 and 1930 federal elections during her 19-year run as an MP.

In 1929, Agnes was a delegate at the League of Nations in Geneva, and was the first Canadian woman to do so. There she was a member of the World Disarmament Committee.

She was also the first of two women to be elected to this House in 1943 as a member of the Ontario CCF, representing the Toronto riding of York East, known today as Beaches–East York. It was during her run as an MPP that Agnes made her finest legislative mark: championing equal work for Ontario women.

When not serving her constituents in public office, the fearless and tireless Agnes dedicated her time to championing equal rights and fair treatment for everyone.

Macphail's progressive views also led her advocacy for women in the criminal justice system that helped her to found the Elizabeth Fry Society of Canada in 1939. She also worked as an agricultural columnist for the *Globe and Mail* in Toronto.

As we gather to honour the 125th anniversary of Agnes's birth, we're reminded how this fearless and outspoken native of Grey county continues to inspire us and to make us proud.

ROBOTICS COMPETITION

Mr. Taras Natyshak: I'm pleased to bring attention to a wonderful event that is going to be happening in Windsor and Essex county. It's the FIRST Robotics 2015 Windsor-Essex Great Lakes Regional competition, set for April 2 at the University of Windsor's St. Denis Centre.

An article from Dave Waddell of the Windsor Star from March 25 highlights some of the great things that are going to be happening: "50 teams attending the second annual event are charged with developing robots to improve recycling and reuse of natural resources...."

"It requires team building, creativity, critical thinking and an ability to raise the \$10,000 to \$15,000 on average that it costs local teams to create a robot.

"The competition is essentially starting up a company.... You need accountants, business students, graphic artists, web designers and communications people as much as technical design people." ...

"This is largely an industry-driven event," said Irek Kusmierczyk, the director of robotics and youth programs for WEtech Alliance." I want to give a shout-out to him. He's a great promoter.

Companies are also backing the effort in this event with financial support: Valiant, which is a tool company in Windsor. This large tool manufacturer has "paid \$50,000 to be the event's platinum sponsor, while local sponsors such as CenterLine, Siemens" and St. Clair College are also chipping in.

"The event will include 10 more teams than a year ago. Teams are composed of up to 30 members and a mentor from industry...."

"The best way to describe the atmosphere is it's part NASA, part NASCAR and part Super Bowl with a little rock" mixed in.

Speaker, I can't wait to go and check this out. It sounds like a wonderful initiative. It certainly is great for our region. I commend all those who will be participating.

COMMUNITY MOVIE NIGHT

SOIRÉE CINÉMA COMMUNAUTAIRE

Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde: I'm pleased to share that last Thursday my office hosted our first free community movie night for 250 of my constituents. This was at the suggestion of some of my caucus colleagues, so thank you very much.

The event was a grand success, with an overwhelming interest based on the fact that many local schools kindly passed the information to the parents in the community. The event took place at a local movie theatre right by my constituency office, and the movie we played was *Big Hero 6*. That movie, I must say, won the Academy Award for best animated feature, and I can attest as well that it was a great movie for those of all ages.

It was also an absolute pleasure to meet so many young families from Orléans who were in town for March break and hopefully enjoyed the event.

Je suis très emballée à l'idée de revivre cette expérience dans le futur. L'accueil de la communauté fut des plus enrichissants. Cette activité gratuite a permis à plusieurs familles d'Orléans de se retrouver en famille pendant la semaine de relâche pour se divertir à peu de frais.

I am looking forward to making this movie experience a seasonal event.

MINISTER'S AWARD

FOR ENVIRONMENTAL EXCELLENCE

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: On March 11, Tom Kaszas, director of the Ministry of the Environment and Climate Change's Environmental Innovations branch, and Luz Felipe travelled to Blyth, home to my constituency office in Huron, to present Murray and Wilma Scott with the Minister's Award for Environmental Excellence. The Scotts were one of nine recipients across Ontario who demonstrated strong commitment to environmental excellence. Recipients collaborated with schools, industry leaders and volunteers to restore wildlife habitat, conserve water and energy, and prevent pollutants and nutrients from entering our Great Lakes.

Over the past decade, the Scotts have undertaken a number of environmental projects, working closely with the Maitland Valley Conservation Authority. Murray and Wilma controlled their farm's nutrient and sediment runoff through erosion-control berms, new wetlands and a natural channel design.

I'm particularly happy about the recognition the Scott family received. You see, Speaker, I know the farm very well. I grew up with the Scott twins, Meribeth and Melanie, I attended many events at their farm as we grew up, and I even picked stones. Murray was my 4-H calf club leader, and everyone from home will understand when I say that with her creative ways, Wilma inspired my own Christmas spirit. Murray also gave back to the community through the years as a municipal councillor for East Wawanosh and subsequently as deputy mayor for North Huron.

I would like to sincerely congratulate Murray and Wilma for their environmental excellence and for leading by example. I would also like to share with them, and know by this statement, that had I known about and been invited to this presentation, I would have done everything in my power to attend.

INTERGENERATIONAL DAY CANADA

Mr. Peter Tabuns: I rise to acknowledge the excellent work done by the Toronto Intergenerational Partnerships in Community—TIGP—based in my riding. They are pushing to have Intergenerational Day Canada recognized across the country. This year, the city of Toronto is going to be joining many cities as it proclaims June 1 Intergenerational Day Canada.

Intergenerational Day Canada, June 1, provides an opportunity to raise awareness in daily life of the many benefits that simple and respectful connections between generations bring to education, health and community safety. TIGP in my riding has been successful in bringing together seniors and high school students for social events and for awards ceremonies. It's made life much richer for our seniors, and for our teenagers it's an opportunity to become involved in the community to help people who could well be their grandparents. Stereotypes of both younger and older people are broken down when they learn about each other. Isolation is diminished and empathy grows in both directions.

Intergenerational Day Canada makes a powerful statement about the value of generational connecting within each and every one's neighbourhood. I will be introducing a bill this afternoon, Speaker, to have this Legislature also proclaim June 1 as Intergenerational Day Canada.

GREEK INDEPENDENCE DAY

Ms. Soo Wong: I'm pleased to rise today to recognize Greek Independence Day. Greek independence was first declared on March 25, 1821. Celebrating this date each year is a wonderful opportunity to recognize Greece's many contributions to the world. After all, this is the country that gave us democracy and the Olympic Games.

It is also a perfect time to celebrate significant contributions that Ontario's vibrant Greek community has made to our province and to my riding of Scarborough—Agincourt. I'm proud to have constituents who are prominent members of the Greek community, including authors, educators, physicians and other professionals.

This Sunday, March 29, I will be participating in the annual parade through Toronto's Greektown, as I have done every year for over 20 years. Participating in the parade each year brings back many wonderful childhood memories. Having grown up in the riding of Toronto—Danforth, I remember being fascinated by the Greek culture on the Danforth, a street with so much cultural and economic significance to our province.

Cultural diversity is what makes Ontario such a great place to live, work and play. As we celebrate Greek

Independence Day and its history, we also celebrate what makes Ontario so great. Zito E Ellas; Zito to Ontario; Zito to Canada.

1510

ELMIRA MAPLE SYRUP FESTIVAL

Mr. Michael Harris: Today I am happy to rise to inform the House of a significant event happening in my riding, the Elmira Maple Syrup Festival happening this weekend in Elmira, Ontario.

As many know, the Elmira Maple Syrup Festival is the largest of its kind, and this year they are celebrating their 51st anniversary. Many events are planned, including a magic show, food truck festival, and cooking demos from celebrity chefs.

Going to Elmira is a tradition for my family, as we always kick off springtime with a trip to the festival. We don't hesitate to try all the exciting foods, activities and events featured in Elmira during this Saturday.

Of course, this event wouldn't continue to thrive without the tireless work of more than 2,000 dedicated volunteers who make this event possible each and every year. They do everything from directing traffic to providing sugar bush tours to running games and activities for thousands of excited participants. Their selfless efforts are the reason people from my community and across the world travel to the township of Woolwich for this important festival. I would like to take this time to thank all of the dedicated volunteers of the Elmira Maple Syrup Festival.

Speaker, on a final note, I also want to issue a warning to our rival Mother Flippers team—big pancake challenge happening on Saturday morning. I encourage everybody to participate. I know that Ms. Fife, the member from Kitchener—Waterloo, will have a team in as well. My team, the Batter Kings, have been practising, and we look forward to Saturday's pancake-flipping match.

Mr. Todd Smith: Go Batter Kings!

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The heckles write themselves.

The member from Halton.

INTERNATIONAL DAY FOR THE ELIMINATION OF RACIAL DISCRIMINATION

Ms. Indira Naidoo-Harris: This past Saturday, Ontarians across the province joined together with the rest of the global community to mark the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination. This day is important to me and countless people around the world.

First proclaimed by the UN General Assembly in 1966, the day was originally established to commemorate the 1960 Sharpeville massacre, a terrible day when 69 people were killed in South Africa after police opened fire on a peaceful demonstration against apartheid pass

laws. I was born in South Africa and I remember well the stories my parents told me about this horrific event.

As someone who witnessed and experienced the devastating impacts of racial discrimination, this day is a powerful reminder of why my family chose to come to Canada to start a new life—a life where acceptance of everyone, regardless of race, religion or background, is celebrated.

This day is a reminder of where we have been and where we are going to go. There is a lot more work to do. It encourages us all to remain committed to work together to end racial discrimination in all its forms and to renew our commitment to building a world of justice, equality and dignity.

Ontario's diversity is our strength. When we work together, free from inequality and injustice, we're all stronger; we all win.

FOODLAND IN AYR

Mrs. Kathryn McGarry: On Friday, March 13, I had the pleasure of attending the grand opening ribbon-cutting ceremony for the new Foodland in Ayr, North Dumfries, in my riding of Cambridge, along with many of the constituents from the community.

There has been a great deal of buildup over the last few months for the opening of Foodland. Residents of North Dumfries have been awaiting the first grocery store open 24 hours a day, seven days a week. They have also hired 100 new employees. This new grocery store will provide new-found convenience for my constituents. The store that preceded the new Ayr Foodland was too small and the hours too limited to keep up with the demand.

As I browsed around the store, I noted the wide selection of ready-made meals and great organic section. This provides my constituents better and healthier options for themselves as well as their families.

It was wonderful to attend the opening and to stand next to a sometimes very emotional owner, Todd Bender, and his family in order to cut the ribbon to officially open the store. We also had a band backing up the ribbon cutting to great fanfare. It was a momentous occasion for Todd—a huge accomplishment—and a major addition to my riding of Cambridge.

Speaker, I wanted to note that I stopped by the store again this past Sunday to shop for dinner for my family before heading back to Toronto. As I pulled in, I was struck by how full the parking lot was on a Sunday evening. Many were visiting with each other in the parking lot. The Ayr Foodland is certainly filling a demand. It will be a success story in our community of Cambridge.

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

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I beg to inform the House that, pursuant to standing order 98(c), a change has been made in the order of precedence on the ballot

list for private members' public business such that Mrs. Gretzky assumes ballot item number 56 and Miss Taylor assumes ballot item number 58.

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT AGENCIES

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I beg to inform the House that today the Clerk received a report on intended appointments dated March 24, 2015, for the Standing Committee on Government Agencies.

Pursuant to standing order 108(f)(9), the report is deemed to be adopted.

Report deemed adopted.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

INTERGENERATIONAL DAY CANADA ACT, 2015

LOI DE 2015 SUR LA JOURNÉE INTERGÉNÉRATIONNELLE AU CANADA

Mr. Tabuns moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 81, An Act to proclaim Intergenerational Day Canada / Projet de loi 81, Loi proclamant la Journée intergénérationnelle au Canada.

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. Peter Tabuns: I had an opportunity to expound on this earlier. This bill proclaims June 1 in each year as Intergenerational Day Canada. I think it would be a fine thing for the province to do.

DSPT INTERNATIONAL (CANADA) INC. ACT, 2015

Mr. Colle moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill Pr15, An Act to revive DSPT International (Canada) Inc.

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): Pursuant to standing order 86, this bill stands referred to the Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills.

MOTIONS

ORDER OF BUSINESS

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: Speaker, I seek unanimous consent to move a motion without notice.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The government House leader is seeking unanimous consent to move a motion without notice. Do we agree? Agreed.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: I move that the opposition day motion tabled by the member for Hamilton Centre be moved by the member for Kitchener–Waterloo.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Mr. Naqvi moves that the opposition day motion tabled by the member for Hamilton Centre be moved by the member for Kitchener–Waterloo. Do we agree? Agreed. Carried.

Motion agreed to.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

INTERNATIONAL DAY FOR THE ELIMINATION OF RACIAL DISCRIMINATION

Hon. Michael Coteau: Ontario's diversity is a great social and economic strength. We speak more than 200 languages and we represent over 200 different countries. I am therefore pleased to speak in support of the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination that the world marked last Saturday, March 21.

This date is forever remembered for a historical tragedy. In 1960, in Sharpeville, South Africa, police opened fire and killed 69 protesters. These protesters were peacefully demonstrating against apartheid laws. They left their homes that morning and marched to give voice to their right to travel freely in their own country. Sixty-nine of those protesters never returned home that day, but they are not forgotten, and the Sharpeville massacre is remembered throughout the world.

1520

The United Nations has chosen this day as the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination. This tragedy in one country became a call for action to fight against racism in all countries.

Here in Ontario, we are proud of our rich diversity. We recognize that much of our quality of life was built by immigrants here in this country.

We also know that racism has been part of our history as well. In recent decades, we've made real progress in changing attitudes, and we now live in a country and a province which knows that diversity is a great strength. Governments create policies to promote inclusion, and the Human Rights Commission is now in its sixth decade of preventing all forms of discrimination, including, of course, racial discrimination.

Mr. Speaker, racism still takes place, and that's why the UN uses this day and asks us all to come together to eliminate all forms of racial discrimination. And in this House, all members pledge to do just that.

We must continue to remember the struggles of those who have fought for our freedom here in our country, and we must continue the work that they started so that one

day racial discrimination will be a distant memory in Ontario's past.

We will continue to fight against discrimination. We will promote understanding and goodwill. We will not rest until equality exists for everyone in this great country and around the world.

FARM SAFETY

Hon. Jeff Leal: I rise in the House today in recognition of Canadian Agricultural Safety Week, which took place last week from March 15 to 21. This annual week-long public education campaign focuses on the importance of safety practices on Canadian farms. This year's theme was "Be the Difference," encouraging individuals, organizations and communities to do their part to ensure that Canada's farms are safe places to live, work and indeed raise a family.

It saddens me to say that fatal accidents happen on Ontario farms every year. Thankfully, the number of these accidents has steadily been decreasing. This is due in no small part to the efforts of organizations like the Canadian Agricultural Safety Association and Workplace Safety and Prevention Services of Ontario. Farm accidents can have a devastating impact physically, financially and emotionally. Individuals, organizations and communities all have a significant role to play in making Ontario farms safe.

Safe farms are more profitable and more competitive, all of which is good for Ontario's economy.

Including health care costs and lost productivity, the annual cost of farm injuries in Ontario is estimated at \$116 million, but on-farm safety is about far more than the bottom line. This is about doing the right thing to protect our farm workers so they can continue their excellent work to produce the good things that are grown, harvested and made right here in Ontario. The good news is that most injuries are preventable as long as producers, farm managers and farm workers understand the hazards on their farms and know how to manage them.

Every day, countless injuries and fatalities are avoided thanks to the education campaigns like Canadian Agricultural Safety Week. My ministry works to support farm safety, and I'm proud to say that, through the hard work of Ontario public sector employees and engaged farm communities, they're hoping to make a difference.

We are pleased to support Workplace Safety and Prevention Services of Ontario, one of the Ministry of Labour's health and safety associations, in their delivery of farm safety education programs. We have a long history of partnering with the WSPS to develop safety projects designed to reach farm families, youth and older workers.

Through the federal, provincial and territorial Growing Forward 2 initiative, we are also funding WSPS's Spanish-language workplace safety materials to help those new Canadians who are making a difference in Ontario. Our province and our economy benefit from the efforts of temporary foreign agricultural workers. The

majority of Ontario's seasonal farm workers come to us from Mexico. They need information on how to work safely on our farms and they need to do it in a form that they can understand.

These materials go a long way in protecting our seasonal workers and in meeting the Growing Forward 2 objectives of enhancing labour productivity and indeed managing risk. We've also seen the need to tailor efforts in reaching our Mennonite and Amish farmers and are supporting efforts in that regard.

Currently, only one in 10 Ontario farmers has a written safety plan. My ministry supported the FarmSafe 101 interactive workshop which happened in Guelph on March 17—St. Patrick's Day. The event assisted farmers in developing their own plans to help increase safety awareness and decrease risk on their farms.

I am proud to stand with the Canadian Agricultural Safety Association, the Canadian Federation of Agriculture and the Ontario Federation of Agriculture in recognizing last week's important safety programming. These important organizations seek to empower producers and their families with the information resources they need to make their farms safe.

Mr. Speaker, our primary agricultural sector in Ontario employs more than 86,000 people, and we have a solemn duty to ensure each and every one of them works in a safe environment. I would like to thank the Canadian Agricultural Safety Association, Workplace Safety and Prevention Services and every organization that supported this initiative for their tireless efforts to improve safety on Canada's farms.

I encourage all of Ontario's farm businesses, workers and communities to embrace the spirit of this year's campaign to "Be the Difference" and make our farms a safe place to work.

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

INTERNATIONAL DAY FOR THE ELIMINATION OF RACIAL DISCRIMINATION

Mr. John Yakabuski: I'm honoured to rise on behalf of the Progressive Conservative caucus to speak on the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, which occurs each year on March 21. On that very day in 1960 in Sharpeville, South Africa, a pernicious massacre took place where police fatally shot 69 Black demonstrators and wounded 180. These victims were simply peaceful demonstrators protesting the discriminatory apartheid laws that imposed restrictions on Black South Africans.

Since 1966, this important day has served as an opportunity for people worldwide to voice their concerns with respect to promoting equality across all backgrounds and cultures. This day is internationally observed with a series of events and activities geared towards combatting racial discrimination, reminding people of its negative

implications and encouraging tolerance in our communities. It is an occasion to renew and perpetuate our commitment to building a world of justice and equality.

This year's theme, "Learning from Historical Tragedies to Combat Racial Discrimination Today," explores racism and racial discrimination at a fundamental level by examining its root causes. This theme emphasizes the importance of learning the lessons that history has imparted to ultimately eradicate racism.

Past human rights tragedies such as slavery, apartheid and genocides like the Holocaust must never be forgotten. I have a personal tie to the Holocaust, as my father and former MPP Paul Yakabuski served overseas during the Second World War and fought against the evils of this genocide in the name of justice and equity. We must use the lessons gained from such horrific events as a means of tackling racially driven discrimination, especially considering the millions of people who are still victims today.

On behalf of the Ontario PC caucus, I encourage everyone in our province to always remember the importance of our shared values of freedom, democracy and human rights. As we celebrate this day, it should be the goal of each and every one of us that our work will not be done until racial discrimination exists only in the history books.

FARM SAFETY

Mr. Toby Barrett: Spring has sprung, and farmers are certainly looking forward to getting out into their fields. The recent Canadian Agricultural Safety Week is good timing to heighten safety awareness for everyone. Many farms in our province are family operations. The home doubles as an industrial workplace, and safety does have to come first for both young and old.

1530

The strength of agriculture in Ontario lies in our farm organizations. The most important meetings to attend are the farm safety meetings. It's all about prevention, and prevention of accidents.

In the early 1980s, I got back into farming in a cash crop partnership. I joined the Norfolk Farm Safety Association. Then I missed a meeting one night, and went back the next month and I'm the president. In Haldimand-Norfolk, we have so many small farms—fruit and vegetable—and labour-intensive farms, with workers from Jamaica and Mexico, as was mentioned by our minister.

We had a great farm safety group; this was back in the early 1980s. We would go into schools—poster contests. We ran chainsaw workshops with a fellow named Rick Lambert. We'd work with our local media: the Simcoe Reformer and the Port Dover Maple Leaf, and Simcoe radio, with Richard Walker.

It was a wonderful group of dedicated, very knowledgeable farmers. We'd sit around the table with people like Hertha Totzke, representing apples; Annie Zaluski, a

strawberry grower; Robin Opersko, vegetables; Martin Splinter, representing dairy; and Steve O'Dwyer, wheat and cash crops.

At one of the sessions I attended, the speaker was a cattleman, a beef farmer, named Ken Kelly. He talked about stress that evening. Back in the early 1980s, this was when my partner was putting up a hog barn, and he had to borrow money at 19%, 20%, 21%. It was bad weather back then; I know that from plowing.

Ken Kelly—tough times; bad prices—had to lay off his hired man. He was working day and night. He thought he had so many problems. Then he walked into a power take-off—540 RPM—and he lost his arm. He explained to us that if you think you've got a lot of problems in farming and then you walk into a PTO and lose your arm, that puts everything in perspective.

INTERNATIONAL DAY FOR THE ELIMINATION OF RACIAL DISCRIMINATION

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: I'm honoured to rise today in this House to speak on behalf of the Ontario NDP caucus and our leader, Andrea Horwath, to recognize March 21 as the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination.

In Ontario, we join our voices with those around the world to recognize the ongoing struggles faced by racialized Ontarians. We stand with them and acknowledge their experiences while we work towards our common goal: the elimination of racial discrimination.

Ontario has the most culturally diverse population in Canada. By 2017, close to one third of Ontario's population will be made up of peoples of colour and first peoples. This is something we should be immensely proud of.

But there are still many challenges being faced in these communities. While it may be easy to look at racially charged events in the United States and think how lucky we are that things are better in Ontario, we cannot ignore these challenges here at home. Racialized communities are overrepresented when it comes to issues of income inequality, unemployment and precarious employment.

We, as a province, must take strong actions to address inequalities, to fully make the diversity of our province work for us. As long as we keep kicking poverty goals down the road, we will never achieve equality. As long as we fail to address precarious employment, all of this will be just empty talk.

We have 1,200 unsolved cases of missing and murdered aboriginal women, dating back to 1980. Aboriginal women are seven times more likely to be murdered than non-aboriginal women in Canada. The Ontario NDP is proud to join with Tom Mulcair and Canada's NDP to call for a national inquiry into missing and murdered aboriginal women.

In 1992, Stephen Lewis created a report on racism in Ontario that documented pervasive racism in Ontario.

More recent reports by the Ontario Human Rights Commission show that this is still true today.

The Ontario NDP join our voices with organizations like the Council of Agencies Serving South Asians and many others in calling on the Premier for the reinstatement of an anti-racism directorate that would report directly to the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration.

While today we in this House talk about this issue, words are not enough. Far too many Ontarians systematically have racism in their daily lives and experience racism.

Rosemary Brown, the first black woman to sit in a provincial Legislature and a New Democrat, said, "We must open the doors and we must see to it they remain open, so that others can pass through"—doors to housing, to economic justice, to access to education, to good jobs, to equity of opportunity.

It is vital that we continue to celebrate the work of those who demonstrate outstanding leadership in eliminating racial discrimination. In Ontario, we have the Lincoln M. Alexander Award, which was first awarded in 1993 under a New Democratic government. The late Honourable Lincoln M. Alexander was the 24th Lieutenant Governor of Ontario, serving from 1985 to 1991. He was the first member of a minority group to serve as Lieutenant Governor in any province. He spent a lifetime breaking down barriers and opening those doors.

We in this House have the power and the responsibility to take action.

FARM SAFETY

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I rise on behalf of our caucus to say a few words with regard to the initiatives of farm safety. We forget that 19 people last year, who worked mostly on family farms, were killed doing the work that they do every day.

The work of a farmer is pretty hands-on. When it's nice out, you've got to be out there. You've got to be working when the sun is shining. You've either got to plant the crop or you've got to pull it, which means you've got to work long hours. Often that leads to fatigue and—who knows—possibly to a lack of attention at times that may lead to an accident.

Most of those accidents, we know, are as a result of interaction with farm equipment, especially tractors. I've only got a few seconds, and I hope you will indulge me. Our good friend Mr. Vanthof, the agricultural critic for our party: His dad died in front of him as the result of a farm accident having to do with a tractor.

I think we all understand to what degree we have a responsibility to make sure that we do everything we can to try to make our farms as safe as possible, and those who work on those farms as safe as possible, and that we take safety seriously—in the way that we are now, but even accelerate it so that next year it's not 19 lives that are lost; hopefully, it's zero.

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

PETITIONS

1540

FISH AND WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT

Mr. Norm Miller: I have petitions in support of the Almaguin Fish Improvement Association's stocking efforts in Lake Cecebe and Ahmic Lake. They read:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry contests the Almaguin Fish Improvement Association's (AFIA) efforts to responsibly support native pickerel populations in Lake Cecebe and Ahmic Lake;

"Whereas this volunteer effort does not rely on any government funding;

"Whereas the actions taken by the AFIA are biologically sound, and have resulted in the continual conservation of these ecosystems for nearly 30 years;

"Whereas the biological integrity of these lakes is a key to the area's economic stability through tourism, and that their viability ought to be preserved for future generations;

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

"That the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry take immediate action to support the Almaguin Fish Improvement Association in their efforts to stock native pickerel in Lake Cecebe and Ahmic Lake;

"That the AFIA hatchery be allowed to remain operational past 2017, so that the community may continue to tend to the well-being of these ecosystems."

Mr. Speaker, I have signed this petition and fully support it.

AUTOMOTIVE INDUSTRY

Mr. Percy Hatfield: "To the Legislature of Ontario:

"Whereas the community of Windsor-Essex county has one of the highest unemployment rates in Canada resulting in stressful lives and financial inadequacies for many of its residents and businesses; and

"Whereas recently the Ford Motor Company was considering Windsor, Ontario, as a potential site for a new global engine that would create 1,000 new jobs (and as many as 7,000 spinoff jobs) for our community; and

"Whereas partnership with government was critical to secure this investment from Ford; and

"Whereas the inability of Ford and ... Ontario to come to an agreement for partnership contributed to the loss of this project;

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

"To insist that the Ontario government exhaust all available opportunities to reopen the discussions around the Ford investment in Windsor and to develop a national auto strategy and review current policy meant to attract investment in the auto sector."

I fully agree with this petition. I will affix my name and give it to page Max to take up to the Clerk.

WIND TURBINES

Mr. Toby Barrett: This is a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario titled "Stop Industrial Wind Turbines.

"Whereas there is a growing body of evidence confirming industrial wind development has serious adverse effects on host communities;

"Whereas over 135 people in Ontario have reported serious negative health effects from industrial wind development, and at least a dozen families have been bought out of their homes;

"Whereas Ontario's Green Energy Act has ended local planning control by stripping municipal councils of their rights;

"Whereas 80 municipal councils, representing two million Ontarians, called on the government to put in place a full moratorium on industrial wind development until an independent epidemiological health study is completed, proper environmental regulations and protections are put in place, and local democracy is restored;

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

"Immediately put a moratorium on all industrial wind proposals; fund an independent epidemiological health study to develop safe setbacks; legislate those findings; develop stringent environmental protection standards for natural areas; and require all projects to comply with regulations based on science and local planning."

I fully agree and affix my signature to these petitions.

LYME DISEASE

Mr. Michael Mantha: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Ontario does not have a strategy on Lyme disease; and

"Whereas the Public Health Agency of Canada is developing an Action Plan on Lyme Disease; and

"Whereas Toronto Public Health says that transmission of the disease requires the tick to be attached for 24 hours, so early intervention and diagnosis is of primary importance; and

"Whereas a motion was introduced to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario encouraging the government to adopt a strategy on Lyme disease, while taking into account the impact the disease has upon individuals and families in Ontario;

"We, the undersigned, petition the government of Ontario to develop an integrated strategy on Lyme disease consistent with the action plan of the Public Health Agency of Canada, taking into account available treatments, accessibility issues and the efficacy of the currently available diagnostic mechanisms. In doing so, it should consult with representatives of the health care community and patients' groups within one year."

I agree with this petition. I present it to page Marin to bring it down to the table and the Clerks.

TRESPASSING

Mr. Jim McDonell: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

“Whereas when private property is damaged it is left to property owners to repair these damages, and the costs can quickly add up to thousands of dollars. The Ontario Federation of Agriculture has asked for a minimum fine for trespassing and an increase on the maximum limit on compensation for damages;

“Whereas Sylvia Jones’s private member’s Bill 36, the Respecting Private Property Act, will amend the current Trespass to Property Act by creating a minimum fine of \$500 for trespassing and increasing the maximum compensation for damages to \$25,000; and

“Whereas the Respecting Private Property Act will allow property owners to be fairly compensated for destruction to their property, and will also send a message that trespassing is a serious issue by creating a minimum fine;

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

“To support Sylvia Jones’s private member’s Bill 36, the Respecting Private Property Act, and schedule public hearings so that Bill 36 can be passed without further delay.”

I agree with this and will pass it off to page Jessie.

LGBT CONVERSION THERAPY

Ms. Catherine Fife: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas in 2013 the fifth edition of the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-5) removed transgender and gender non-conforming identities from the mental disorders category;

“Whereas LGBT youth face 14 times the risk of suicide compared to their heterosexual peers and 77% of trans respondents in an Ontario-based survey had seriously considered suicide with 45% having already attempted suicide;

“Whereas an Ontario study found that transgender youth aged 16-24 have a 93% lower suicide rate when they feel supported by their parents in the expression of their gender identity;

“Whereas LGBT conversion therapy seeks to prohibit gender and sexual orientation expression, has no professional standards or guidelines in how it is practised and is condemned by all major professional associations of health care providers; and

“Whereas Ontario’s Ministry of Health currently funds LGBT conversion therapy through OHIP;

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

“That the Ministry of Health immediately cease funding all known forms of conversion therapy.”

It’s my pleasure to affix my signature and give this to page Emma.

WIND TURBINES

Mr. Toby Barrett: This is another completely different set of petitions on industrial wind turbines.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas there is a growing body of evidence confirming industrial wind development has serious adverse effects on host communities;

“Whereas there are over 300 homes in the area of the proposed UDI Port Ryerse Wind Farm;

“Whereas a precedent has been set by other counties in Ontario for bylaws of increased setbacks of 1,200 to 2,000 metres for the erection of wind turbines in populated areas;

“Whereas property values are decreased by proximity to wind turbines;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to reinstate municipal powers to allow Norfolk county to reassess and increase setbacks to 2,000 metres in populated areas, to honour a moratorium on construction until these bylaw adjustments are met, and to reimburse lost property values in this affected community.”

I also agree with these petitions and affix my signature.

FIRST RESPONDERS

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

“Whereas emergency response workers (paramedics, police officers, and firefighters) confront traumatic events on a nearly daily basis to provide safety to the public; and

“Whereas many emergency response workers suffer from post-traumatic stress disorder as a result of their work; and

“Whereas Bill 2 ‘An Act to amend the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act, 1997 with respect to post-traumatic stress disorder’ sets out that if an emergency response worker suffers from post-traumatic stress disorder, the disorder is presumed to be an occupational disease that occurred due to their employment as an emergency response worker, unless the contrary is shown;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to unanimously endorse and quickly pass Bill 2 ‘An Act to amend the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act, 1997 with respect to post-traumatic stress disorder’.”

I sign this petition and pass it to page Marin to deliver.

HOSPICE FUNDING

Mr. Jim Wilson: “Whereas there is a discrepancy between how hospices are funded in Ontario; and

“Whereas Matthews House Hospice is the lowest-funded hospice in the Central Local Health Integration Network (LHIN) and among the lowest-funded in the province, even though it serves as many clients or more than other hospices that receive greater provincial support; and

“Whereas Matthews House has been told by the Central LHIN that LHINs do not fund residential hospice operational costs and yet hospices in other LHINs, including Barrie, Huntsville, Richmond Hill, Owen Sound and now Collingwood, all receive operational funding from the province; and

“Whereas in February 2010 Matthews House Hospice was promised a solution to its underfunding by the Central LHIN which has never materialized;

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

“That the Wynne government immediately develop a comprehensive strategy to deal with hospice funding to ensure that people in south Simcoe and all Ontarians receive equal access to end-of-life care.”

I appreciate and agree with this petition and will sign it.

1550

ONTARIO DISABILITY SUPPORT PROGRAM

Miss Monique Taylor: I have a petition to save the ODSP Work-Related Benefit.

“Whereas the \$100 ODSP Work-Related Benefit provides a critically important source of funds to people with disabilities on ODSP who work, giving them the ability to pay for much-needed, ongoing work-related expenses such as transportation, clothing, food, personal care and hygiene items, and child care; and

“Whereas the Ministry of Community and Social Services plans to eliminate the Work-Related Benefit as part of a restructuring of OW and ODSP employment benefits, and has said that ongoing work-related expenses will not be covered by its new restructured Employment-Related Benefit; and

“Whereas eliminating the Work-Related Benefit will take approximately \$36 million annually out of the pockets of people with disabilities on ODSP who work; and

“Whereas a survey conducted by the ODSP Action Coalition between December 2014 and February 2015 shows that 18% of respondents who currently receive the Work-Related Benefit fear having to quit their jobs as a result of the loss of this important source of funds; 12.5% fear having to reduce the amount of money they spend on food, or rely on food banks; and 10% fear losing the ability to travel, due to the cost of transportation; and

“Whereas people receiving ODSP already struggle to get by, and incomes on ODSP provide them with little or no ability to cover these costs from regular benefits; and

“Whereas undermining employment among ODSP recipients would run directly counter to the ministry’s

goal of increasing employment and the provincial government’s poverty reduction goal of increasing income security;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to stop the provincial government’s plan to eliminate the ODSP Work-Related Benefit.”

I couldn’t agree with this more. I have affixed my name to it, and I will give it to page Danielle to bring to the Clerk.

WATER FLUORIDATION

Ms. Indira Naidoo-Harris: I have with me a petition to the Ontario Legislative Assembly entitled “Fluoridate All Ontario Drinking Water.

“Whereas fluoride is a mineral that exists naturally in virtually all water supplies, even the ocean; and

“Whereas scientific studies conducted during the past 70 years have consistently shown that the fluoridation of community water supplies is a safe and effective means of preventing dental decay, and is a public health measure endorsed by more than 90 national and international health organizations; and

“Whereas dental decay is the second-most frequent condition suffered by children, and is one of the leading causes of absences from school; and

“Whereas Health Canada has determined that the optimal concentration of fluoride in municipal drinking water for dental health is 0.7 mg/L, providing optimal dental health benefits, and well below the maximum acceptable concentrations; and

“Whereas the decision to add fluoride to municipal drinking water is a patchwork of individual choices across Ontario, with municipal councils often vulnerable to the influence of misinformation, and studies of questionable or no scientific merit;

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

“That the ministries of the government of Ontario adopt the number one recommendation made by the Ontario Chief Medical Officer of Health in a 2012 report on oral health in Ontario, and amend all applicable legislation and regulations to make the fluoridation of municipal drinking water mandatory in all municipal water systems across the province of Ontario.”

I am affixing my signature to this petition and will hand it to page Caleb.

OPPOSITION DAY

GOVERNMENT’S AGENDA

Ms. Catherine Fife: I move opposition day number 2.

Whereas the 2014 Liberal budget:

—cuts 6% out of nearly every ministry;

—cuts health care and fires nurses;

—cuts education and closes schools;

—cuts transportation and closes bus stations across the north;

—cuts affordable housing and slashes \$86 million out of Toronto's social housing programs;

—privatizes public hydro companies and sells off our public assets;

—opens new corporate tax loopholes that don't create jobs but help wealthy companies buy luxury sports tickets;

—fails to address tax fairness or consider any modest changes to corporate tax rates;

—makes life more expensive for families by letting hydro bills and gas prices rise;

—will mean firing 100,000 people, according to the Liberals' own hand-picked economist, Don Drummond; and

—news agencies have said that the Liberal budget will mean the "deepest cuts since Harris";

Therefore, it is the opinion of this House that the 2015 budget should stop cutting services, privatizing and selling off assets, putting wealthy corporations ahead of people, and, instead of continuing the Liberal austerity program, explore rolling back corporate giveaways while maintaining a competitive combined corporate tax rate, create jobs, invest in services and make life more affordable for the 13 million Ontarians who make our province work.

I move this motion, Mr. Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): The member from Kitchener–Waterloo, Ms. Fife, has moved opposition day motion number 2. Ms. Fife.

Ms. Catherine Fife: I rise today on behalf of the Ontario NDP caucus, and the Ontarians we proudly represent, to say to this Liberal government: Enough is enough. Ontario has half a million unemployed people. The unemployment rate has been over our national average since 2006. Ontario has lost 300,000 manufacturing jobs. Working people in Ontario have seen their wages stagnate while the cost of everyday life keeps climbing.

There are strikes on our campuses and nurses walking picket lines. There are four OPP investigations into this Liberal government's corruption. The government has wasted billions upon billions of dollars, and now the government is going to tell Ontarians—middle-class and struggling Ontarians—that they need to tighten their belts a little bit more once again. Enough is enough.

In the last election, the Conservative Party to my right proudly proclaimed that they planned to cut 100,000 jobs from all across this province. As it turns out, Mr. Speaker, they weren't the ones with such a plan. While the Liberals were decrying this Conservative plan, it turns out it was actually a Liberal plan, their plan, too. Don Drummond, this Liberal government's hand-picked banker/cutting expert, said on TVO's *The Agenda* that in order to meet their projections, the Liberals would have to cut at least 100,000 jobs.

Now, they don't want to talk about this, but it is clear that they aren't being up front with the people of Ontario. One hundred thousand jobs—these aren't McJobs; they

are good, well-paying middle-class jobs. One hundred thousand jobs across Ontario's 107 ridings works out to 935 jobs in each riding. So for the people watching at home, including my mom, think about your community. Now imagine it with nearly 1,000 of your neighbours out of work.

Ontarians sent a strong message against the Conservative and Liberal plan, but this arrogant government, as usual, is not listening. The people of Ontario made it clear in the last election: They rejected a Conservative austerity agenda. But rather than recognize that mandate, this Liberal government has pushed forward with one of the most aggressive austerity agendas this province has ever seen.

It is said that Liberals like to campaign from the left but that when they get into power they rule from the right, and we are seeing this in action. If this is big-L Liberalism in Ontario, then who needs a Conservative Party? That's the outstanding question here today. We are watching Tim Hudak's dream realized by Kathleen Wynne.

New Democrats rejected the last Liberal budget, and we continue to fight it each and every day. When it was first introduced, we called it out for what it was: an austerity budget focused on massive cuts and privatization. This does nothing to improve the lives of Ontarians. We were right, and now Ontarians are seeing the results.

The last budget pushed cuts of 6% out of nearly every ministry. It's in your own budget; it's on page 244. Now the public services that Ontarians rely on are threatened, and we are about to lose tens of thousands of good-paying middle-class jobs.

The last budget pushed cuts to health care. Now we have ERs and obstetric wards closing, we are losing hospital beds in wards all across the province, and we have nurses either getting fired or out on the picket line. Many of us on this side of the House have walked those picket lines with the nurses.

The last budget pushed half a billion dollars' worth of cuts to education. Now we see school closures in cities and towns and hamlets all across the province. There are closures across Ontario, and here in Toronto some one in five schools are slated to close in some of Toronto's most struggling neighbourhoods.

The last budget cut child care spaces in 18 communities in Ontario. Now we have massive wait-lists and shortages of affordable child care.

1600

The last budget pushed cuts to transportation infrastructure across the north, where the Liberals have already done so much damage. The north has largely been ignored by this government for too long. Apparently, not satisfied with selling off the ONTC for a loss of nearly \$1 billion, we see closures of more bus stations across the north.

The last budget set the stage for massive privatization and the selloff of our public assets. Now we have the Clark panel to give the Premier political cover to privatize hydro distribution and delivery and to hold a fire sale

with Ontario's public assets in a desperate attempt to scrounge together some money.

The last budget opened \$2.5 billion in new corporate tax giveaways that not only do nothing to create jobs but merely help wealthy companies wine and dine their clients. The last budget cut affordable housing and slashed \$86 million out of Toronto's social housing programs.

It did all of these things, but nowhere in that budget did this Liberal government address tax fairness or consider even rolling back corporate tax giveaways. Nowhere in that budget did this Liberal government address the rising costs of living for middle-class and struggling families. Nowhere did this Liberal government address the rise of precarious work and the fact that Ontario has some of the highest economic inequality in the country. Nowhere did this Liberal government do anything to address the \$8 billion it wasted on P3 giveaways to wealthy construction consortia.

If that was the most progressive budget in Ontario's history, then I can think of no better reason for the people of Ontario to elect a New Democratic government.

This is the austerity budget that New Democrats have been speaking out against. We didn't get a chance to vote against it, because you did what you did. Ontarians are speaking out too. They're living this budget, the pain of this budget, each and every day, and they see it for what it is: cuts, slash, burn. The people of this province did not vote for that. Sadly, the worst is still to come. News agencies have said that the 2015 Liberal budget will mean the deepest cuts since Mike Harris.

We know the Liberals are going to make it look like they are finally getting tough on the deficit. Well, you see, Speaker, the Liberals have a bit of a perception problem. They are worried, after 12 years of scandals and misguided priorities and incompetent management, that, shockingly, Ontarians don't see them as being strong on the economy—imagine. So now they are going to try and scramble to balance the books, and they are going to do it on the backs of the most vulnerable and the middle class of this province.

All signs point to a budget that continues down a path that has been failing Ontarians. The Liberals will introduce deeper cuts to health care, education and public services that Ontarians rely on. The Liberals will try to sell our public assets. They will offer more no-strings-attached corporate tax breaks to the wealthiest corporations. They will shift more good-paying jobs from the public sector to Walmart. Pretty soon, Mr. Speaker, you may see two-fours of Coors Light in a Walmart close to you. That's how desperate this government is.

They will continue to increase fees on health care services, public services and transit. They will continue to favour their Liberal friends and Liberal insiders. They will continue down a reckless path to privatize Ontario's hydro system.

I've heard from people—Conservatives, Liberals, New Democrats, and everyday citizens—and they all know, intuitively and realistically, that it is a bad idea to

privatize our hydro system. Mike Harris and Ernie Eves eventually realized that selling off our electricity system was a step too far. They had that kind of insight. Dalton McGuinty, just four short years ago—incredible, isn't it? Just four short years ago, he grudgingly decided that it was a bad idea.

The Globe and Mail said, "Selling off prized electricity assets to pay for transit projects smacked more of a cash grab than a considered approach to maximizing value and making sound energy policy."

The Financial Post said, "Premier Wynne will discover that there is no juice to be squeezed from Hydro One. Any attempt will necessarily hit Ontario electricity consumers and taxpayers."

People are worried because they know that selling our public electricity system will only lead to even higher electricity bills, with less oversight. Here are just a few examples of the emails that I've received, and I'm sure all of us in this House have received similar ones.

Jim from Thornhill rightly points out that "this privatization proposal was not on the election ballot. The Wynne government has no mandate to proceed with such asset sales, unless it has the approval of the voters. Selling off hydro was not in your platform."

Robert calls the plan "incredibly short-sighted and stupid."

Nick from Brampton correctly writes, "Selling Hydro One or any part of it will raise already high electricity prices, which many struggle to pay."

Ontarians already pay the highest electricity bills in Canada. Ontarians have suffered a 300% rise in their electricity bills since the Liberals took office, Mr. Speaker. Ontarians will see their bills rise 42% over the next five years. The Liberal response to this is not to address the problem, but rather to give away our hydro system for corporate profit.

We know how this story ends: even higher bills, less oversight, another Liberal boondoggle waiting to happen. The people of Ontario—we all know that this is a bad idea; we all read the emails and the letters every day—are worried. People in this province are genuinely and sincerely worried about this short-sighted move.

You don't sell your future, but that is exactly what this government is planning to do. You can't cut or sell your way to prosperity, it has been proven in other jurisdictions; it doesn't work.

Ontario's New Democrats are calling on this Liberal government to stop the cuts to health care, public services, and rein in public sector CEO salaries. Stop cutting education, stop closing schools, and consider following the example of the Ontario NDP "Open Schools" plan, which would create more child care spaces in our under-used schools. Close corporate tax loopholes, and conduct a thorough assessment of rolling back the combined corporate tax rate to a competitive level. Stop the current P3s giveaway to wealthy corporations, and focus on a public and transparent procurement process. This province will never recover economically if you continue to waste billions of dollars on P3s.

The process going forward with infrastructure should allow the Financial Accountability Office to determine the value for money of Ontario's infrastructure projects. Put the Financial Accountability Officer to work. Prove all the rhetoric that you've been giving this House. Abandon the short-sighted fire sale of Ontario's public assets and get a handle on the skyrocketing cost of hydro, and make life more affordable for Ontarians. It is possible to do, Mr. Speaker.

This is about priorities. This motion in this House today is about priorities. Our job is to put the priorities of Ontarians first; our job is to make the quality of life for Ontarians, the people that we serve, better. The Ontario NDP is firmly committed to that job and to these priorities, and I encourage this House to follow our lead and adopt this motion.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Stop the clock, please. I beg to inform the House that, pursuant to standing order 98(c), a change has been made to the order of precedence on the ballot list for private members' public business such that Mr. Fraser assumes ballot item number 44 and Mr. Balkissoon assumes ballot item number 46.

Further debate.

Ms. Eleanor McMahon: It's a pleasure for me to have the opportunity this afternoon to stand in the House, further to the member opposite, and speak about our government's responsible plan to balance the budget by 2017-18, while still making important investments in the areas that matter the most.

Speaker, we were elected on an agenda of building Ontario up, and in doing so investing in people and in infrastructure. I am not only proud to have run on this agenda; I am proud to serve as part of a government whose balanced approach to investment has won the hearts and minds of Ontarians.

I'll start by citing some examples. Hospital funding has increased 50% since 2003, from \$11.3 billion to \$17 billion this year. In fact, Infrastructure Ontario is working with Joseph Brant Hospital, in my riding of Burlington, to develop our new state-of-the-art facility as part of our government's commitment to infrastructure renewal.

1610

When the project is complete, it will add 144 single-patient rooms, an increase of 70% in single-patient rooms across the hospital—patient rooms with comforts and conveniences that include three-piece washrooms and many of the comforts of home—and nine new state-of-the-art operating rooms. A new intensive care unit will be built, along with an expanded cancer clinic. All of this is part of our plan to build Ontario up. Why? Because our hospital has not had an investment since 1971. I think all of us would agree that that is long overdue.

Recent Ontario government investment in local mental health and addictions organizations is also key to building Ontarians up. This will enhance access and care for Burlington residents who are experiencing mental health and addictions challenges. Why do I know this? Because I have many people coming into my office with

these kinds of issues, and they're talking to me about the need to invest in these kinds of programs for their children and their families.

Our LHIN, the Hamilton Niagara Haldimand Brant Local Health Integration Network, has been provided with \$2 million in funding for this year to invest in local and regional high-priority services across the LHIN geography. If you'll allow me, Speaker, I'm going to elucidate on a few of those.

LHIN-wide services that will benefit citizens in Burlington include:

- \$81,000 for the LHIN-wide expansion of existing evidence-informed mental health promotion training for families, caregivers and other non-health professionals;

- \$131,000 for the implementation of a LHIN-wide mobile outreach team that will provide early intervention, advocacy and support for youths aged 17 to 24 and their families, as well as improvements in terms of system navigation for those people who need it most;

- \$176,000 to enable capacity-building for concurrent disorders—a huge issue—including funding for a LHIN-wide concurrent disorders project implementation co-ordinator; and

- over \$3,000 to train health care professionals across the region in areas such as collaborative assessment and management of suicidality—unfortunately a growing issue right across our province.

The next phase of Ontario's Comprehensive Mental Health and Addictions Strategy includes a massive \$138 million over three years for community agencies to support improvements to mental health and addictions services throughout our LHINs across Ontario.

Supporting community mental health and addictions as I've just outlined is part of Ontario's Patients First: Action Plan for Health Care. It is also part of our government's four-part plan to build Ontario up by investing in people's talents and skills, building new public infrastructure like roads and transit, creating a dynamic and supportive environment where business thrives, and building a secure savings plan so everyone can afford to retire.

These are a few concrete examples of how the investments made by our government in the last budget are positively impacting the lives of Ontarians in very meaningful ways.

We're also committed to strengthening Ontario's economy and creating jobs. In fact, it was recently announced that we have entered into a partnership with Toyota Canada to expand its Elmira manufacturing facility and create and sustain over 450 jobs. In February, General Motors Canada announced a \$560-million investment in their Ingersoll facility, safeguarding over 3,000 positions. Again, in February, Ford announced that its luxury GT will be built in the Markham area. Chrysler announced a \$2-billion investment in their Chrysler Town & Country van assembly plant in Windsor. I had the pleasure of working at the minivan assembly plant in Windsor, Ontario, when I was a youngster. Linamar, in partnership with our government, is investing over half a

billion dollars in their Guelph operations, creating 1,200 new jobs and safeguarding over 6,700 existing positions.

Just a few weeks ago, closer to home for me, Speaker, Ford announced a \$400-million investment in their Oakville facility—great news for our community, for Halton region, and a huge mark of confidence in our province. In fact, virtually every chief economist in Canada, and the Conference Board of Canada to boot, has said that Ontario will lead the country in economic growth this year, and we are the leading province in terms of foreign direct investment as well.

Honda, in partnership with our government, is investing over \$857 million in its Alliston facility.

Our government has been the most supportive government to the auto sector in Ontario's history, which underscores our commitment and determination in growing Ontario's economy and creating good-paying and long-term employment. It speaks to our agenda of building Ontario up and how residents in communities like mine in Burlington will benefit from the tertiary impacts of these critical investments in our economy and, in particular, our manufacturing sector.

This is in stark contrast to what we would see in this province if the member opposite and her colleagues in the third party had their way. In fact, as we all know, they voted against our budget, which included many of the things they now demand, including an Ontario Retirement Pension Plan which will, among other things, serve to ensure that we do not have a generation of Ontarians retiring in poverty. No one wants that. They talk of the dangers of selling government assets, etc., and they repeatedly bring up our government's supposed cuts to health care and education, but in their own platform they laid out their plan to reduce spending in these areas by \$2.2 billion by 2017-18.

In short, our government clearly holds the best interests of Ontarians as our number one priority, as my examples have shown. We are dedicated to balancing the budget by 2017-18. That is our plan for the benefit of future generations. We're investing in crucial infrastructure—\$130 billion over the next decade—to ensure that Ontario is able to reach its full potential. We will continue to invest in health care, education and transportation because they matter to our communities, to Ontarians and to us.

In short, our government is committed to responsible investment in Ontario in all aspects to make it the best place that it can be.

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

Mr. Jim Wilson: The New Democrat motion that we're debating today contains a number of interesting points dealing with the deficiencies contained within the Liberal 2014 budget, last year's budget. Some of these points we even agree with. For example, we agree that the budget cut health care and continues to fire nurses on a daily basis, reversing a pledge the Premier made to the people of Ontario in the 2014 election. She wasn't going to fire anybody. We agree that the budget cut education

and closed schools, again reversing a pledge the Premier made to the people of Ontario in the 2014 election. And we agree that the budget makes life more expensive for families by letting hydro bills and gas prices rise, again reversing a pledge the Premier made to the people of Ontario in the 2014 election.

However, the solutions that Progressive Conservatives would propose to address these problems are very different from those of our NDP colleagues to my left. The type of policies the NDP would like to put in place are not ones we would agree with, and therefore we cannot support this motion.

But given these examples of how the Premier reversed herself just mere weeks after the June election, I'm very concerned with what might be in the Liberals' upcoming budget. How many more reversals to pledges will there be? And that's putting it politely, Mr. Speaker. How many more additional burdens will be put on the people of Ontario and on Ontario families? And how many more people will be fired as a result of this government's policies and the debt they continue to rack up?

The provincial debt has been rising because of out-of-control government spending. The amount of money that has to be paid in debt-carrying costs is having an impact on services that people need. Interest on the debt is the third-largest expenditure for this government, after health care and education. At \$10.6 billion currently, that works out to \$29 million each and every day—\$29 million each and every day that goes to pay interest and is lost to other expenditures that would benefit people. Servicing the debt currently takes up 9.1% of provincial revenues, and it's estimated to grow by a further \$400 million this year. These figures are clearly astonishing and unacceptable.

Week after week, we hear examples of firings because the government doesn't have the money to fund the people needed in important areas of public service: front-line health care and education, to name two big areas—people such as the special-education teachers in Toronto who will be let go, meaning vulnerable children's education will be affected. Hospital staff at the children's hospital in Ottawa, CHEO, are losing their jobs because funding for them is no longer available. Just think how many special-education teachers could be funded if this \$29 million a day that goes to interest was available to help those children. Just think how many health care staff could be funded, including the 42 nurses in Sudbury who are about to be fired, if this \$29 million a day was available.

1620

This government spends and spends and spends. This spending increases the debt. More money must go to carry the cost of that debt, so money needed for real people to provide real services disappears. The Provincial Auditor, in her last report, indicated that there's a real problem because of our debt and our debt servicing costs; that important programs are being crowded out, as she put it. It's the first time that we've seen that from a Provincial Auditor, where she's worried enough to say that you're not going to have money for health care and

education and other important priorities because of your debt and your debt servicing costs. It's the people of Ontario who suffer. The government needs to get its fiscal house in order and stop making the people of Ontario carry the burden of its overspending and lack of financial control.

I'll conclude, Mr. Speaker, by saying that over the next few days the Ontario PC caucus will be raising a number of issues that we think must be key elements in the government's upcoming budget. On budget day, we'll be looking at how its contents measure up to the criteria we have set. We will be basing our consideration of the budget on how the government is planning to deal with the very important issues we will be raising.

Mr. Speaker, the Ontario PC caucus believes the Liberal government can do much better than it did in its 2014 budget, and we would like to see if it will do better.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): I'd like to thank the leader of the official opposition, the member from Simcoe–Grey.

Further debate.

Mr. Paul Miller: Speaker, budgets are written every year, and we deal with budgets. I believe in the five Ps: Prior planning prevents poor performance. If you look at that significant comment, you would look at all the waste that we have seen in the last three or four years. It started with eHealth, Ornge, gas plants, MaRS.

The new one that's going to cost this province a fortune—and I've got lots of details that will be coming forward—is the Pan Am Games. There's no way that they're going to balance the budget in 2017-18. It's impossible. Security for the games started off at \$113 million, and then about a year later it went to \$238 million. I found out today that they haven't even signed agreements with the regional police departments: Peel, Halton, Hamilton, Niagara. Our police chief just cancelled all leave and holidays for our police department in Hamilton, which will involve, I'm sure, lots of overtime. The OPP announced today that they're going to cancel holidays but there will be no more money involved in that. I can't believe that for a minute. This \$238 million that they're sticking by now, from the original \$113 million—trust me; I wouldn't be surprised if that's up another \$100 million, minimum. And now they're going to balance a budget.

Speaker, there are so many other things going on that are going to cost this government a fortune. They talk about road preparations, and they talk about infrastructure. They're going to invest in all these projects throughout Ontario. That's great, but I know from my days on city council, and I'm sure other members in here know, that costs escalate. They put in a bid, they get the bid, and then halfway through the bid they tell you, "If you don't give us another \$100 million, we'll go under because I can't pay my subcontractors; I can't finish the project." I don't know how many times cities got saddled with either not good workmanship because they did it quickly and couldn't afford to finish it properly, or secondly, they underbid and couldn't afford to finish it. A lot of the

companies go under because they don't have the resources to back up what they say they're going to do. These are just some of the things that they don't take into consideration when they form a budget.

Let's talk about contingency funds for the things that may happen as we go along in the next two years. Have they got any? I don't know. Contingency funds are there to support overpayments, overruns, "Lightning struck today and we didn't know it"—things like that.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Liberals lied.

Mr. Paul Miller: And maybe another scandal might get thrown in just for a bonus.

The bottom line, Speaker, is that there's no possible way that they're going to come in under budget on the Pan Am Games. There's no possible way that they're going to meet their budget deadline of 2017-18—because these are just some of the things that I can touch on in the couple of minutes that I've got. It's absolutely unconscionable for them to stand up here every day and say, "Folks, everything's under control. Trust us. Look at our record." We're I don't know how many billions—what could I have done with just the eHealth, Ornge, gas plants and MaRS, which at this point is closing in on \$2 billion? What could I have done with \$2 billion in Hamilton?

I'll tell you, that stadium would be finished on time, if it was in Canadian hands. That's number one. Number two: I'd have the best road system in Ontario; I'd fill every pothole in Hamilton. Every kid in my schools would go to school with a full stomach instead of half-full. I wouldn't have single moms coming into my office with nowhere to go with two kids in tow.

What do they cut? They cut the winter clothing allowance for kids. What is that? But they can blow a billion dollars rebuilding a gas plant that was already built because the people didn't want it there in the first place. They built it anyway, in spite of what the people wanted, and then they say to the people, "Okay, we'll tear it down because we don't want to lose our four seats." Give me a break.

The waste in this building since I've been here is phenomenal. It's astronomical. If people ever got a grasp on how much is wasted here day in and day out, millions and millions of dollars—what could I do with that money in Hamilton? I could help a heck of a lot of people.

So all I can say is this: Good luck. First of all, you're not going to be on budget. Secondly, you're going to have overruns on this budget you are proposing. And you are cutting, because I know first-hand, through very close people to my family, that there are people being laid off in nursing, being laid off in London, the Deputy Premier's own hometown. They are laying off and cutting back there and all over Ontario.

So don't tell me everything's in good hands with Allstate, because I've got a real problem with that. I've got a feeling there are going to be a lot more surprises cropping up in the next two or three years. I'll be sitting here, and if you see a little smirk on my face, you'll know what I'm thinking.

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

Mr. Arthur Potts: Talk about having a smirk on your face. Mr. Speaker, I've got to tell you, I didn't play a lot of baseball growing up. I played a little softball in high school, but I never had the pleasure of playing T-ball when I was a very young child, and you know what T-ball is all about. T-ball is when you put the ball on the stick and you make it really easy to just lob one out of the park. This is what this looks like to me, Mr. Speaker: a little game of T-ball that the leader of the third party has brought forward for us today.

If I were to describe this motion in one simple word, it would be "masochistic." The reality is, this is attacking a budget that we ran on in an election in June. June 12, the people spoke. They overwhelmingly, in a majority government, supported the direction of this government.

Mr. Speaker, understand: We ran on this budget. I went door to door, often with the budget in my hand, and showed them where we were doing such incredibly progressive things.

I know that during the lead-up to writing that budget, we travelled, the committee, all across the province to talk to people in Ontario about these great progressive opportunities to keep the government—the minority government at the time—from falling. I know that the previous member from Beaches–East York was on that committee. He went to all these communities in Ontario and said, "What would you like to see in this budget?" The people responded, "We'd like to see this; we'd like to see that." So much of that went into this budget. Yet the members of the third party voted it down, forcing what I've often said in the House was an unnecessary election.

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: But it's a good thing they did.

Mr. Arthur Potts: But it's a good thing they did—thank you, Lou—because I wouldn't have had the pleasure to be here with my members on this side of the House.

But the reality is, it was only nine months ago, and yet the leader of the third party is bringing forward this motion.

I went to the convention in which she received a heartfelt endorsement for her leadership. I was delighted that she could continue on in her capacity, that she was able, but I noticed a very fundamental shift during that process of that convention when speaker after speaker got up and was critical of the direction that the party took during the course of the election.

1630

I can think of a couple of members who were particularly upset with the direction that the third party took in that election. She had to assure the house that she would come back to her progressive, very left-wing roots in order to move forward, which we thought meant that she would be supporting the budget, a budget which she and members of the committee had helped frame, but that didn't happen. At the convention—I talked about her—she had this transformation successfully, but now she

comes back with a full-on critique of what has to be the most progressive budget in the history of the province of Ontario, under the direction of what I like to call—and did during the campaign—the new, progressive Liberal Party of Ontario.

Because that's what we are. That's why we have members from Sudbury coming from the federal NDP party over to our party: because he recognizes that we are the progressive voice in Ontario and an opportunity for him to participate in that. Let's remember what that budget did—

Miss Monique Taylor: There's no way a real New Democrat can turn into a Liberal.

Mr. Arthur Potts: It's easy enough. All you have to do is recognize where your progressive roots are, as I did.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Order.

Mr. Arthur Potts: I know the previous member for Beaches–East York had to vote against a budget that was going to put over \$200 million into the Toronto East General Hospital. I know that pained him, because this is an institution that I have supported for 20 years, and I know that he did as well. I know that he had to vote—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): I appreciate the sidebars, but this isn't the place to have sidebars, so I would ask that respect be shown to the member in debate. I would ask the member to please continue, and others to show their respect. Thank you.

Mr. Arthur Potts: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate that. Sometimes I think that what we need, if I can go back to a sports analogy, is maybe a soccer approach: a little yellow card once in a while, and then to a red card and you're out of here. I appreciate your cautioning the members opposite so I can continue my remarks.

As I was going door to door, I would ask, "What do the current member and the NDP have against giving raises to personal support workers?" We are shifting the role of health care out of hospitals and into communities, using personal support workers, using RNs, using other ways of delivering health care. We're going to have more people in the pharmacies—pharmacists—conducting initial examinations, giving shots. We're downloading—offloading—from the hospital sector.

When this motion says, irresponsibly, that we're cutting health care and firing nurses, it doesn't appreciate that we are reallocating resources where they can be used far more efficiently, far more effectively. This is absolutely important. For the NDP to come forward knowing—and we had the remarks from the member opposite about the deficit. Let's be very clear: We have about a \$25-billion-smaller deficit now than it would have otherwise been, because we have made tremendous progress. We have been repeatedly coming in lower than our deficit targets, and we are well on target to balance the budget in 2017-18, so I urge all members to vote against this motion. It just isn't in the best interests of Ontario.

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

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: It's a pleasure to join the debate today. I must say, I want to congratulate the New Democrats for bringing this motion forward. Although I won't be supporting it, because I don't agree with the way we need to get there, I want to congratulate them for bringing this issue forward.

I've always said, and I've always maintained since I arrived at this place almost nine years ago to this day, that the most exciting time to be a member of the Legislature is the lead-up to the budget, the budget and post-budget, because that is when we get to express our values and who we are as legislators, and we get to express the values and the ideas and the needs of the constituents who have sent us to Queen's Park.

For them to start this process I think is important. I believe that our leader of the official opposition expressed some of the concerns that we have that are shared. We just don't agree on how to get there and what the solutions are. With that respect, I'm not going to support the motion, but I want the New Democrats to know that I think it's important that they put this forward.

For the member from Beaches—East York, who said that this motion was masochistic, I take great exception to that. In fact, why I take great exception to that, Speaker, is because I take great pride in standing here, in speaking about the needs of Ontario, in speaking about the values that I hold and the ideals that the people of my riding expect me to express here. And for the third party to do that today I think is the appropriate response of any legislator, it is the appropriate response of any caucus, and it is the exact thing we are sent here to do.

They're talking about the cuts. Let me be very clear on the hypocrisy of this government. On the one hand, they went into an election—

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): I would ask the member to withdraw.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Speaker, I withdraw that. I do apologize to the member from the Garden City for that.

Here's the issue, and this is the crux of the problem: For four elections in a row, we have seen a Liberal government come to office. They put forward a platform to the people of this great province and they said, "This is what we will do."

The first time they said that they would not raise taxes. Within the first year, they brought in the health premium, a \$900 income tax, the single largest income tax increase in Ontario's history. They brought that in.

The second election came, 2007. The Liberals said, "We won't raise your taxes," and then they brought in the single largest sales tax increase in Ontario's history, the HST.

The third election happened in 2011. They said, "We're sorry, we're sorry, we're so very, very sorry," and then they brought in an eco tax, the single largest environmental tax in Ontario's history.

In 2014, when they said they won't raise taxes, they won't cut services, they won't sell hydro, they won't sell beer in convenience stores or grocery stores—they're

changing all that, and they're going to bring in what will now become the single largest environmental tax in Ontario's history, with a carbon tax. They have brought in a jet fuel tax which is making it more expensive for any Ontario traveller to travel across this province. They are also bringing a job-killing payroll tax that they've masked behind a pension plan which many people will never derive any single benefit from. That is what their next budget will be.

The history of this government is to say and do anything in order to obtain power, then retain power. That's what we've experienced, Speaker, because this is a government, through eHealth, through Ornge, through the cancelled gas plants and now, as we see sadly, a Sudbury by-election scandal, that will do anything in order to retain power. Four OPP investigations, including two into the current Premier's office in the last several months: They will do anything in order to stay in power.

That brings me to the 2014 election. I remember it quite vividly. I don't mind telling members in the gallery or those at home today that it was probably the toughest election I ever fought. I'll tell you, part of it was because of the unprecedented attacks of over 20 unions amalgamated together to spend close to \$10 million attacking our leader and our party; but secondly, it was difficult because the government said that there was effectively no deficit too big for them, and they could deal with it. They were going to meet all of their deficit reduction targets.

When my colleague from Niagara West—Glanbrook, the former leader of the Progressive Conservative Party, put forward his plan in order to get back to balance, the government of the day, which ran for re-election, effectively said that they wouldn't do those things. Now, less than a year later—less than nine months later—this government is now on track to reduce or eliminate 100,000 jobs in the public service. Don't take my word for it; ask the nurses at CHEO; ask the education workers at the Toronto District School Board; ask the PSW workers across this province. Tim Hudak told the truth, and Kathleen Wynne decided she wanted to mask the dirty little details of the debt and the deficit.

They talked about privatizing hydro as a bad thing, dating back to Dalton McGuinty's days. The current Minister of Energy over a year ago said that they would never privatize hydro. Yet they decided when they assembled people for a \$1,500-per-plate fundraiser that they were going to start to sell off hydro—but they're not doing it to pare down the size and scope of government; they're not doing it to eliminate the debt and the deficit; they're not doing it for the future of Ontarians; they're doing it so that they can have more spending power. They're basically selling off the family car in order to buy a big vacation. In their minds, that's how it works, and to Ontario families I say that's exactly what's happening.

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When we look around the province of Ontario today, we are seeing the catastrophic effects of a government that is allowing its debt and its deficit to take control of

our situation. My leader, the leader of the official opposition, today stated in this House that the third-largest spending priority of this government is servicing the debt and the deficit. That means every single dollar spent on servicing the debt and the deficit is a dollar taken away from our children in schools and our patients in hospitals. That is the direct correlation. Our leader also said today that this is a government that isn't concerned with trying to eliminate the debt and the deficit. He indicated today that it's \$29 million a day that is being wasted and diverted away from those kids. I think that is what's important here.

When the New Democrats today talk about the cuts to health care and firing nurses, that is a consequence of the government not meeting its deficit reduction targets. When the New Democrats talk about education and school closures, that is a direct response to a high debt and deficit. When they talk about affordable housing being slashed across the province, that is because of the debt and the deficit. The transportation and closing of bus stations across the north: Those are all consequences of a government that doesn't take its fiscal health seriously.

Now they're going to have to adopt the Progressive Conservative platform in 2014, a platform that they didn't campaign on, that they told us they didn't believe in, and one that I think they're only half-heartedly trying to make work. These are the real consequences.

I'm going to say, Speaker, that the Liberal reality and the Liberal campaign promise are two very different things, and that's why we're here today. I can sense the frustration, not only with my own colleagues but those of the New Democratic Party. When we were told one thing by this government and they do another, it's very frustrating, and we see the direct consequences to that.

Speaker, I started this—and I'll end soon—by talking about the views and values of the people I represent in Nepean–Carleton and how proud I am as a member from the city of Ottawa to stand here each and every day for the past nine years.

One of the people that I've drawn a great deal of inspiration and support from recently passed away, and I want to share with you a little bit about Ken Ross. I've spoken about him many times in this assembly. Ken was a great community leader from Barrhaven. He owned Ross's Independent grocery store. Whenever there was an opportunity to speak about the budget or supply or any of those big things that we talk about here at the Legislature, Ken was the first call I made. He was the chair of the business improvement area. He was involved in the Legion in which I'm involved, the Lions Club, the South Nepean Autism Centre; he was a founding director. I was one of the founders as well. He had a great deal of compassion for other people.

Ken was the exact type of person we want to see succeed in Ontario: a business owner who understands that government can't and shouldn't do it all itself. So he would bring people together in order to ensure we had wonderful services in our community. In fact, when he died, he was chairing the Barrhaven Food Cupboard,

which I'm also very much involved in. I must say, just in the last hour, to the Barrhaven Legion how proud I am of them for donating \$10,000 to that cause, and \$5,000 of that in the name of Ken Ross.

So when I close today, I must say this: Each budget I would speak to Ken, and Ken would give me his straight goods, straight talk on how it would affect businesses, how it would affect service clubs, how it would impact the people that I represent. He's not with me this year, not with any of us this year, to talk about the Ontario budget and its proposals. So I say this to my constituents: I will continue to talk to them, as I spoke with Ken and many of them previously, and I'll look forward in the next month, as Progressive Conservatives, New Democrats and Liberals look around this province, look at the real challenges that not only this province faces, but that the people who live here, the people who call Ontario home, face. We bring those to the floor of this assembly and we debate them vigorously. For no idea is a bad one in this assembly; it needs debate. For that, I want to say thanks for the opportunity to speak, thanks to the New Democrats for bringing this idea forward, and hopefully to the Liberals for a spirited debate. But on behalf of the Progressive Conservative caucus, I'd like to say thank you.

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

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: I was looking forward to opposition day this week, because this opposition motion is very important. It's important, Speaker, because we need to make sure that the people of Ontario hear the voice from the opposite side of this House as to why this budget is not what it appears to be. It's not the progressive budget that the Liberals claim it is. It's actually filled with austerity measures. That's what our job is here, Speaker, on this side of the House: to point those out.

I want to talk a little bit about the atmosphere in this House since I've been elected in 2011. The reason I talk about that is because, in 2011, many of us here in the New Democratic Party were elected in a minority government. The way business was conducted in this House was extremely different from what we're experiencing today in a majority government. I prefer a minority government.

Interjections.

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: That's right—because it actually works like democracy is supposed to. Because we have a voice. We have a voice here in the majority government, too. We can continually push this government to do the right thing.

I'm very proud, I have to say, of the House leader we have here in this party, from Timmins–James Bay. I'm privy to being part of that House team, and I hear how he tries to negotiate, bring suggestions forward, co-operate and compromise to try to make this government listen. I wasn't on the House team in the minority government, but I can see, in a majority government, that he's doing a wonderful job to get these members, these MPPs, to pay attention to what issues Ontarians want to hear about, and how it's affecting people in our ridings.

You cannot be representative of a majority government and, surely, act the way this government has been acting—completely arrogant. I've seen the difference in behaviour; I've seen the minority government, the way they came to the table and tried to make concessions, and now in a majority government, Speaker, it's extremely different. They kind of maybe have a little cackle here and there. They don't actually believe what we're saying—but you should listen, and you should believe what we're saying because we are the voices that we represent. Whether it's a minority or majority, we're going to communicate those voices and those issues to this government, so that they can actually have a budget and produce results in Ontario that people can be happy with. People will actually be able to depend on child care spaces, on health care, on education and on infrastructure.

They're not doing that great of a job, Speaker. That's why we're here. We're here to communicate that. Honestly, Speaker, we create the environment we work in in this Legislature. I want to create that environment for this government to talk to us, listen to us, approach us, take our good suggestions—please take them—use them as your own, but we will claim them. We will claim them, Speaker.

The reason I'm talking about the atmosphere in this House is because, during the lunch break, we had the Ontario Association of Former Parliamentarians Distinguished Service Award, and the honouree at that event was Stephen Lewis—

Applause.

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: Yes. There were a lot of older parliamentarians that served in this House, and they talked about how things are so different; how people, how MPPs, how politicians, how they actually interact with each other—much different than they used to.

Speaker, I would rather have that respect here in this House, and respect the differences of our opinions. When we're giving you our opinion, it's specifically to help you understand what's going on on this side of the House. There's a difference—not just what you're telling us is actually correct. People see it differently here. For this government, as a majority government, not to actually take that seriously is very distasteful. So I just want to say that we are here in this House, we agree to disagree, but when we leave, we should have all the due respect for our colleagues.

I'm very proud to serve with each and every member in this House, but during this budget process we need to point out that this is an austerity budget. This budget is not progressive, and the people of Ontario are going to see cuts in every ministry of 6%.

1650

The member from Timmins–James Bay talked this morning about invasive species. The MNR—this is a fact—is being cut: 6% every year in that ministry. How can that be progressive, and how did this government not explain that to the people of Ontario in 2014? It's wrong.

I'll pass it over. I'm done my debate, Speaker. Thank you very much.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further debate. The member from Mississauga–Streetsville.

Mr. Bob Delaney: Well, thank you very much, Speaker. I understand the Ontario Dental Association is looking to have the rubber match, and I'm hoping that the Speaker will again be coaching the team.

I'm very happy to speak today on our government's plan for the economy and our plan to grow the province. I have read the opposition day motion, which is a whole series of assertions, none of which actually stand up to any scrutiny. As the essence of the motion itself makes fairly little sense, I thought I would just talk about what the government has actually done.

One of the things that the government has done is, of course, to be very cognizant of the need to streamline and make our services far more efficient. If one remembers back to early 2012, when Don Drummond tabled his report on the delivery of public services in the province of Ontario, we've implemented more than 80% of Don Drummond's recommendations. We're not going to implement, as a government, all of them, because there are some that go beyond what our government thought was fair and reasonable in the circumstances, but where Don Drummond has made a reasoned, sensible plea to optimize and streamline parts of the government, the government has done it, and four out of five of his recommendations have been implemented, with more still to come.

This speaks to an ability to do something that this motion doesn't. This motion says, "Let's preserve the status quo forever." That's not a progressive way to go for this province. Our province was made great by challenging the status quo and asking ourselves, "Is this the best way that we can run our province?" Very often we've said that just because we've always done it that way, that doesn't mean to say that that's the way we should continue to do this in the future.

So Ontario is saying this year that just because we have always, for example, sold wine and beer in a certain way, through the LCBO and through the Beer Store, is that the only way? Can we have a reasonable and sensible dialogue? Can we look at other alternatives? And is there another way to get a better deal for the taxpayer, ensure that we retain choice and convenience, and preserve the integrity of the system?

I think that's a discussion well worth having. I don't know what the outcome of it is—I'm sure it's something that we're going to be talking about as the province considers the budget—but I'm very, very interested in that. I was born and raised in the province of Quebec, where we have a different system. I spent some of my adult years in the province of British Columbia, where we do things differently than we do in the province of Ontario.

I'm extremely interested to know, looking at the way we do things in Ontario and comparing them to the way we do things in other parts of Canada and parts of the States—I certainly want to avoid some of the excesses in the States, where you pay as much or more for some of

the popular brands of what you're buying but the choice available isn't anywhere close to what you can find in the province of Ontario.

That's what we mean when we say "unlocking the value" of strategic provincial assets. What we're doing is saying, "Just because we've always done it that way, is that the way we should do it in perpetuity?" That's what the opposition motion is saying. They're saying, "Just keep right on doing it, because we like the way it's being done and we don't think anything should change." We respectfully disagree. We think that change is good. We think that change is something that we should approach, we should discuss. We should come up with a workable plan, which in this case is what I think the government is doing.

The province has also moved to strengthen our funding to community and developmental services. Just last year, Ontario invested an additional \$810 million over three years in our community and developmental services. Coming from Peel region, one of the ways in which we felt it over the last few years is that as a rapidly growing region we have been complaining in Peel, saying—and they've used it, Fair Share Peel—"We in Peel region, which means Mississauga, Brampton and Caledon, make up about 11% of Ontario's population. Let's look at what we're getting as our portion of the pie in some of these areas of human services," and it was far less than that. I have to commend and compliment my former colleague Linda Jeffrey, now Brampton's mayor, for her work. The two of us worked very hard on this, and in several of the areas in which we've worked, lo and behold, our share of the provincial funding in Peel region is now 11%, plus or minus only a few fractions of a decimal point.

Speaker, those are some of the key points I wanted to make in my few minutes.

I will be voting against this motion.

I think Ontario should be able to ask itself: Are we doing the best job we can? Do we have the courage to question our status quo? I think we do.

I'm looking forward to moving forward with a government that I've been proud to serve for some 11 years and which has taken this province and retained its status as a leader in Confederation, a status that we're certain to see in our economic performance in this and subsequent years.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): I thank the member from Mississauga—Streetsville.

Further debate?

Mr. John Yakabuski: It's a pleasure to join the debate on the opposition day motion put forward today by the member for Kitchener—Waterloo. It's an interesting motion. I'm certain they put a lot of thought into drafting it. But at the end of the day, I won't be able to support the motion. There are just too many caveats in there for me that would make it impossible to do what should have been done years ago.

Why do we have a motion like this, and why are we dealing with such a mess in Ontario? Well, my colleague,

our leader, from Simcoe—Grey and my colleague from Nepean—Carleton spoke about it earlier. It's the failure of this government over the past almost 12 years in dealing with the fiscal circumstances that they've created. Why do we have a situation where we're cutting core services here in the province of Ontario? Because the government didn't do their job in managing their fiscal affairs when they should have and could have and now their back is against the wall. Their back is against the wall, because all the people out there are saying, "Ontario's finances are precarious." The debt-rating agencies are saying, "You're going down. You've gone down to A-minus with a warning." Why? Because they didn't do the job when they should have.

If they had paid some proper attention to managing Ontario's debt and deficit in a more timely fashion, we wouldn't be in the situation we are in today: a \$12.5-billion deficit in an economy that should be doing so much better, but it's not. That is the challenge that this government has. I don't envy them, but I certainly don't have sympathy for them because the chickens are coming home to roost and they're the ones who bred the chickens.

The debt servicing costs in Ontario are the third-largest item in the budget following the expenditures on health care and education—almost \$11 billion. If that number wasn't there, we'd have \$11 billion to spend on the things that Ontarians need and deserve. Certainly, I say "deserve" because the way this government has picked their pockets over the past 12 years and not delivered the services they have asked for—clearly, the people have paid the bill and the government has not delivered. That could be the mantra of this government: "You pay the bills. We'll fail to deliver." It could be their slogan because we could repeat that so many times.

Yet, in the past, they were elected on platforms that really didn't speak to what the plan was. "I will not raise your taxes." Do you remember that guy? He stood in front of the television cameras and said, "I will not raise your taxes." Do you remember who that was?

1700

Mr. Todd Smith: I remember.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: And he signed the pledge.

Mr. John Yakabuski: He signed the pledge in front of the cameras. That was Dalton McGuinty, the former Premier of Ontario. He proceeded with the largest tax increase in Ontario's history—the largest tax increase in Ontario's history.

That was the first time the people got duped by the duplicitous nature of this government. Then, of course, in 2007, they never said a word about the HST, how they took that tax and put it on so many more items, including gasoline—gasoline, Mr. Speaker, which is so important to the people in my riding of Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, where we have to drive pretty well everywhere. There are no subways. There is very little public transportation. People pay far more than their fair share of gas taxes to begin with, which does not go back to them. Then on top of that, Dalton McGuinty brought in the

HST and added that on to gasoline, which hurt people even more.

Throughout their almost 12 years now, we have seen hydro rates go up and up and up, from a time when we were very competitive and had one of the lower rates across the country at 4.3 cents a kilowatt hour, to now when it's over 14 cents a kilowatt hour at peak. Speaker, there are so many people in this province who simply can't afford to pay their hydro bills. They have to make a choice: Are they going to pay their rent, or are they going to pay their electricity bill? Are they going to pay their taxes, or are they going to pay their electricity bill?

In areas like where I come from, Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke, a lot of people built their homes in the 1970s, when everybody was being told, “Go electric. Heat your home electrically. It's going to be the best bargain out there. It will be the cheapest, the most efficient. You won't have to worry about building all this duct work. You won't have a furnace. You won't have anything that has a fire box in your home.” What happened? Well, then, Dalton McGuinty came along. Now to heat those homes in the wintertime—and we've had pretty harsh winters; the last couple of them have been among the harshest in history. The cost of heating those homes for most people—many seniors who are on fixed incomes are paying more for a hydro bill than they're getting in old age pension.

Now the government is talking about selling Hydro One. They're throwing all kinds of trial balloons out there to see which ones are going to float and which ones are going to get pinpricked and bust. They're not giving us many of the details.

I'll tell you one thing they'd better keep in mind. It is the electricity consumer who has paid for Hydro One. It is not the government's right to simply take that asset and say, “We're going to build subways with the sale of that asset.” That belongs to the people who paid their hydro bills faithfully all those years and have been taking it on the chin from this government.

If you're going to sell that asset, first of all, it has to be thoroughly reviewed by the Financial Accountability Officer. It has to be vetted and reviewed by the Auditor General so that we know, the people know, they're getting fair value for the asset. The problem is, they want to sell this asset at a fire sale price because they want to make the budget look a little better. They want to make the bottom line look a little better. Somebody out there is going to get a bargain, or at least they're going to be portrayed as getting a bargain from the government. But the reality is, there are so many liabilities attached to the sale of Hydro One that there may not be as many suitors as they like to think. Before they have a deal, before they sign anything, it better be vetted by those two officers of the Legislature so that the people who have paid for that asset know that the government is selling it for fair value, not at a fire sale price because they're trying to dig themselves out of the hole that they put themselves in.

That's what's wrong about this government: They want to blame everybody else, including Stephen—oh, don't get me started on Stephen Harper and the federal

government, because every time this government has a problem, they try to pin it on Stephen Harper.

Stephen Harper has nothing to do with your deficit here. He has nothing to do with your health tax and the mess you've made in health care. He has nothing to do with the cuts in education and the mess you've made in education. He's had nothing to do with your broken promises, not one of them. Stephen Harper's had nothing to do with it, but every time you find yourself in trouble, you try to blame Stephen Harper. You try to blame Stephen Harper because you can't manage your own affairs. It is about time that this government took responsibility for its own actions.

I understand why the NDP has brought out this motion. They're trying to point out what the effect of mismanagement has led us to. It's a disaster, and the people are going to pay for it. The people are paying for it right now all across the province. They're going to face cuts in hospitals. They're going to face cuts in schools from the very government that always promised, “Oh, no, no, no. We're not going to cut anything. We're going to make sure everything is just running along tickety-boo.”

Well, I'll tell you: If this government stays in office, the people who elected them are going to—they're already regretting it. They're already regretting it, but by the time the next election rolls around, they will send the message to you people because it is a disaster, it is a fraud what you perpetrated on them with the way that you—

Hon. Glen R. Murray: What did you get—6%?

Mr. John Yakabuski: I got more than that, Glen. What did you get?

Hon. Glen R. Murray: I got 6% in Sudbury.

Mr. John Yakabuski: I didn't run in Sudbury, Glen. Did you run in Sudbury?

Hon. Glen R. Murray: Your party did.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Oh. You weren't up there trying to bribe anybody, were you?

What has led to these cuts is the wasted years that this government had to deal with the debt and deficit in this province and chose—not just failed to do it, Speaker, but chose—not to do it. They would rather have been going around buying the support of the people across the province, making sure that everybody was being—

Hon. Glen R. Murray: Well taken care of.

Mr. John Yakabuski: He says, “Well taken care of.” They were being hornswoggled. They were being hornswoggled into believing that this government actually cared about them. What they've done is they have put a tax not only on the people of today, but a tax on the people of tomorrow. If a child is born in Ontario today, he's born with a \$23,000 debt—a \$23,000 debt on his head because of what this government has done.

I wish that this motion didn't have to be quite this way because there are a lot of things in here we'd like to support. But we also can't support the NDP's plan for Ontario.

I just wish the government here would have had some shred of honesty when they were campaigning in the last

election, because what we got from them and what they're delivering today are two completely different stories.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Before I recognize the next speaker, to the member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke: There were a number of times that I initially missed where you used what I would deem unparliamentarily language. I will give you the opportunity to withdraw, if you did.

Mr. John Yakubuski: Every one of them I withdraw, Speaker, whichever one offended you.

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

Miss Monique Taylor: I'm always pleased and privileged to be able to stand here in the House and to talk about a budget that is to come forward and a budget that we faced in 2014.

I have to say, the clearest message that I would like this Liberal government to hear is that Ontarians do not want cuts. That is not what they voted for. That is not what they expected. When we heard a so-called progressive Premier stand up through an election and talk about the things that she was going to do for this province, I certainly did not hear that she was going to be cutting nurses, that she was going to be cutting education, that she was going to privatize our hydro or that she was going to start to privatize our LCBO and make changes. Those are the kinds of things that Ontarians want and deserve to know that they're safe in public hands, and I believe that that, as New Democrats, is what we believe here also.

1710

I just want to go through a few of the cuts that we have found that the Liberals claim do not exist, but we know very well and clear. I'll tell you, Speaker: My office is inundated each and every day with casework because of the cuts that this government has put forward—cuts to our WSIB and what that's doing to workers in this province daily. I have people coming in who have been in the system for quite some time, and now they're being cut off medication; now they're being cut off therapies.

I'm just going to go through some cuts that I found. Let's start with the ones that are directly in my riding. This morning we heard the Deputy Premier talk about how there are not cuts to schools, and that they were making changes. These are just a portion of my riding. I have an east mountain, a central mountain and a west mountain. This is just the central mountain arc: They closed Eastmount Park. They closed Linden Park. They closed Cardinal Heights. For high schools, they're closing Barton, Hill Park and Mountain.

That is just in the centre of my riding. We still have to do the east mountain arc and part of the west mountain. What is this government thinking when it comes to education for our children? These are services that our people in Ontario expect and deserve, and New Democrats are going to stand up every single day in this House and put motions like this forward, to make sure that we're keeping the Liberals on track.

Let's talk about health care and the lack of a cut of nurses—and yet, I had specific nurses from a hospital that's in my riding, Juravinski, send me a note. It says that “a clinical manager informed the nurses on a particular floor”—she said it but I changed it—“just the other day that we are losing eight full-time RN positions, four on each ward,” so that would be two wards. “The positions will be replaced by eight full-time RPNs. Reason: The budget cannot sustain eight full-time RNs. RPNs are cheaper.”

Now, this is a government that states that they're not making cuts. This is a government that states that things aren't going well in our health care, our education and our hydro, yet we're seeing full well, very clearly in front of us, and hearing daily from people that it's unaffordable and that changes are affecting their lives.

I know I don't have a lot of time left, Speaker. Let me just find—okay. Here's another cut, for ODSP. For the Work-Related Benefit, \$100 was always allocated to people on ODSP when they worked, and it would help them within their daily lives, whatever it may be: getting to work, uniforms, clothing, personal care, hygiene, child care, transportation—work-related expenses. But now the Ministry of Community and Social Services—that's very progressive, Speaker—is going to eliminate the Work-Related Benefit as part of their restructuring of OW and ODSP employment benefits, and has said that ongoing work-related expenses will not be covered in its new, restructured Employment-Related Benefit.

Eliminating the Work-Related Benefit will take approximately \$36 million annually out of the pockets of people with disabilities who are on ODSP and are trying to work. Is this the voice of a progressive government? I think not. These are our most vulnerable people, people who have been put into a system at no fault of their own, and yet these are the people that this progressive government has decided to pick on.

I think that's about all of my time, Speaker. I appreciate the opportunity.

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

Hon. Jeff Leal: Mr. Speaker, what a great opportunity. I wouldn't miss this for the world, to get on the record here this afternoon with this NDP motion. It's really interesting to see the rewriting of history. I remember the NDP platform of last June: nine pages in total. Six pages were blank, and the three pages that remained talked about their cutbacks of \$600 million in the province of Ontario. I guess they kind of forgot about that, because there is no question in my mind that last June the NDP, the third party, were Tories in a hurry. They couldn't wait to be to the right of Mr. Hudak. Mr. Hudak was proposing a cut of 100,000 jobs in the province of Ontario, and then the third party was piggy-backing on that to reduce our spending by \$600 million.

But we know the NDP. I was a city councillor in Peterborough, back in 1993. I remember sitting down with my good friends in CUPE in Peterborough. There were tears in their eyes when they heard about the social contract. Mr. Speaker, you remember that. Every collect-

ive agreement in the province of Ontario went like that, and that's what happened then.

To make things worse, in 1993, they froze the ODSP rates in the province of Ontario. In fact, every poverty analyst in the province of Ontario at that particular time said that when the third party froze the ODSP rates in the province of Ontario, it was the start of the downward spiral of poverty in the province of Ontario. Then, my friends in the opposition, they took over government in 1995, and then they slashed the rates by 21%. We remember those days very well. That was the NDP of last June: Tories in a hurry, and good luck to them. It didn't work out very well.

Let's talk about progressive issues in the province of Ontario. My friends in the third party: The greatest social program in the province of Ontario to reduce child poverty was the Ontario Child Benefit program. It's now being indexed. The late June Callwood, one of the most articulate spokespeople on the issue of poverty in the province of Ontario—we now have awards in her honour for people who are involved in reducing poverty—said that the Ontario Child Benefit was the most progressive program in four decades in the province of Ontario. You would have thought that the party of Tommy Douglas and David Lewis and Stephen Lewis would be on board to support that. Were they on board to support that? No.

When we proposed a program to bring in the minimum wage to the province of Ontario, to put in an indexing system in the province of Ontario that was agreed upon by people in the Ontario Chamber of Commerce and the people that were involved in poverty reduction in the province of Ontario, you would have thought the party of Michael Cassidy would have supported this. Did they support it, my friends? What did they do? What did they say? No.

Mr. Bob Delaney: They turned it down.

Hon. Jeff Leal: They turned it down. These were all the fundamental building blocks of our budget that we presented last June.

We will continue, as the Premier said and my colleague the Minister of Finance said, to invest in people, we will continue to invest in infrastructure, and we will continue to invest in a positive business climate in the province of Ontario. Don't take my word for it. Take the word of the Royal Bank of Canada, when they said just recently that economic growth in Ontario will grow by 3.3% in 2015; Ontario will lead the nation again. Let me say that again: Ontario will lead the nation again in economic growth.

Interjection.

Hon. Jeff Leal: I'll get to my friend Mr. MacLaren in a moment, flying the airplane around for Patrick Brown and landing at Pearson and Hamilton international airports. But we'll leave that to the end of my speech.

I want to just get back to economics: 3.3% growth, leading the nation. We just got the jobs report for February: 60,000 new full-time jobs created in the province of Ontario, again leading the nation.

It's interesting. As Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs, we have a sector in Ontario, the ag sector:

\$34 billion in GDP contributing to Ontario's economy; 760,000 individuals are employed in this sector each and every year; 23% of Ontario's manufacturing capacity is in this area—growth, growth and growth.

But I'm an optimist. You know, when you're bored in Peterborough, you get up every morning, you see the sun rise in the east; you're ready for a great day because you know that this is a great place to live, work and play. I come here—look, I've got a lot of friends on the official opposition benches but, you know, doom and gloom every day, doom and gloom.

But the fact of the matter is, Mr. Speaker, that the reality is that Ontario is moving forward. Just recently, of course, there was a by-election in Sudbury, Ontario, an opportunity for all four major parties in Ontario to put their platforms to the people. I'm very pleased that a very articulate man has joined us, Mr. Thibeault, and is doing a great job.

Applause.

Hon. Jeff Leal: Yes, let's give a hand for him.

With the recent train derailment in northern Ontario, he was there supporting the cause, marshalling government resources, which is so important—so important—to make that happen.

Mr. Speaker, I'm told that I'm out of time. But we're prepared to vote down this motion this afternoon.

1720

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

Mr. Bill Walker: It's a pleasure to speak to this motion today. I'm going to start off by just saying that I hope the government will actually bring in a responsible budget this time. The current debt and deficit are resulting in cuts to front-line services and hurting the people who can't access the services they so badly need.

Almost every day in my riding office, we have people coming in asking us for help because this government has run our province into the ground. This government has to prioritize. They have to stop wasting money on things like gas plant scandals and wind turbines and to start investing in people.

We have the highest energy rates on the continent, Mr. Speaker. We used to have the lowest rates. We had a booming economy, and people wanted to come here and invest their money because of those rates. Now we're scaring them away to other provinces.

We're spending \$11 billion on interest. Sadly, that's not going to our hospitals. That's not going to our schools. It's not going to people with special needs. It's not going to developmental services. It's not going to people who need affordable housing. That's \$11 billion on interest payments, and that is at historically low interest rates.

They can't say that they don't have enough money, because they've had the highest revenues in our history, really, and they still continue to run debt and deficits.

The people of Ontario have a right to feel secure about the economy and jobs. Everyone wants to feel secure, knowing they have a job and that they're going to have that ability to provide for their loved ones, just as they

have a right to feel that all the taxes and fees they pay will provide them with access to care and services when they need them. Again, it's not happening. I hear it in my riding of Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound. As many of my caucus colleagues share with me, lots of people are coming in to the office every day, emailing and calling with concerns about the services that they're not able to access anymore when they need them the most, particularly our seniors. It's deplorable, some of the things that are happening with our seniors out there—not providing. They paved the way for us, and we cannot turn our back on them at this point in time.

Just recently, I wrote to the Minister of Health asking very specifically to stop the closure of the restorative care unit at the Chesley hospital in my riding. The Chesley RCU is a proactive, supportive program that enjoys an 83% success rate and costs about \$800,000 annually to run. It also saves millions of dollars in diverting patients from ERs. Those people aren't returning to the hospital ER, which is their only other alternative if they're not cared for properly. It enjoys the full support of its staff and patients, who rely on this exemplary program.

To sum it up in the words of a constituent at a public meeting I went to—we had 400 people come out of the woodwork to try to save this program—“This restorative program should be a dedicated line item (in the budget). It is cost-efficient and enables seniors to return to their own homes. It provides in-house physiotherapy, which CCACs do not. It works on memory issues, which CCACs do not. It supports the family, which CCACs do not. Its staff provide care, changes, dressings, bandages, guidance to family members, and it delivers what it promises ... which CCACs do not.

“This program should be showcased and duplicated throughout the province. Too often the seniors, who were the backbone of this country, have become the ‘forgotten’ ones as they tend not to be vocal.... As the number of seniors is set to double in the coming years, restorative programs such as this one must be increased, not cancelled.”

I hope, again, that the government is listening to this, because it truly is a program that works. You would hope that they would actually deploy more of these programs across the province. They're moving more to care at home, which makes sense. It's a good way to do it. People want to be in their homes.

But here's a program that works. Here's one that prepares people to transition from the hospital to their homes so they actually can be there longer, and yet they're not able to find money for this. But do you know what? They seem to find millions and millions of dollars to cover up one of their scandals or a scam that's going on. It's amazing how they always find the chequebook for that.

Mr. Todd Smith: Pan Am Games.

Mr. Bill Walker: Pan Am Games—they're probably going to have to find the chequebook for that to bail some of that out.

They found \$1 billion for the gas plants scandal, but they can't find \$800,000 for seniors' care in a community like Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound. It's shameful that the

government and its minister could not give the seniors in Bruce and Grey the support that they need to keep the Chesley RCU open. Cuts to services for seniors seem to be running rampant in this Liberal administration.

I also have to voice concerns over the continued cuts to home care. Some regions have lost as much as 30% of their home care. Some have completely eliminated care for some patients. I don't understand how I can hear this Liberal government claim that they're putting more money into care and then hear from the front-line providers and patients how their care is being cut, how their surgeries are being cancelled, how they can't access life-saving drugs, how their community is losing the obstetrics unit, and how workers are being laid off from hospitals.

The nurses' association has told us that this government has presided over as many as 1,600 nursing layoffs in the past few years. The layoffs were apparently happening at the same time that they were promoting and advertising almost 3,000 new vacancies for nursing jobs in Ontario. That's quoted from the 2013 HealthForce report.

There is simply no transparency in the system, similar to the lack of transparency on the developmental services wait-list. The same day that I read a media release from the government on how 14,000 children and adults with disabilities were receiving support services sooner, I heard how the Ombudsman is being urged to investigate the ridiculously high developmental services wait-list. One year has passed since this government promised to put \$810,000 into developmental services, yet we still have 21,000 people with developmental disabilities on the wait-list.

Clearly, things are not progressing as the Liberal government claims they are. In fact, these statistics are an embarrassment for the government and, sadly, an embarrassment for the people of Ontario. This government is perpetuating a cycle of failure for some of our most desperate citizens. These cuts are an indication that front-line services are being affected by a growing debt and deficit.

Mr. Speaker, I ask the people at home again to just think about this: \$11 billion in interest payments. Think about that. Think about what you could do in your riding, Mr. Speaker, if you had a portion of that \$11 billion. Think of all of the people who come through your office asking for help—

Mr. Todd Smith: To keep our nurses.

Mr. Bill Walker: To keep our nurses, keep our health care, keep those people out of the hospital—more proactive health care, Mr. Speaker, so that, rather than waiting to try to treat people when they're sick, we could be putting more money into proactive promotion, healthier living.

We could be ensuring that there are more schools. Last year, I sat through three accommodation reviews in schools in my riding. If we lose schools and hospitals in our rural communities—in any community, really, but it's particularly negatively impactful in a rural community—

Mr. Todd Smith: There goes the neighbourhood.

Mr. Bill Walker: Absolutely. You lose one of those, and that's like losing the community. That's the fabric that has built our communities—the spirit of volunteerism, the spirit of people coming out of the woodwork to help with those school programs and with hospital programs.

Put simply, Ontario is increasingly dependent on lines of credit, because it spends more than it collects. This government, in my three and a half years here, every year has come out with a deficit budget. They can't rein in their spending. In my mind, they don't really even seem to be trying to cut that spending. Yet they promise to balance the budget in 2017-18. Their hand-picked economist, Don Drummond, is predicting that they'll have a \$325-billion debt built by that time if they don't stop spending more than they bring in. They have a spending problem, and they need to address that.

I'm going to just go back again. This number sticks out at me every day that I get up and come to this hallowed hall: \$11 billion that's not going to front-line care. It's not going to seniors who want to stay in their homes. It's not going to developmental services. It's not going to folks in Community Living. It's not going to help the frail elderly who need help. It's not going to those people who need their medicines.

Mr. Speaker, we hear all the time, across this province, of waiting lists in our health care system. Why is it that in today's world we still have continued waiting lists with this government? It's because they waste \$11 billion on interest payments. It is my hope that this budget will actually rein in some of that, because we can't continue to go down the road that we continue to go down here.

I hear every time we come out with a new budget that it's going to be fair and equitable and balanced and it's going to be wonderful. But it's not balanced. I'm certainly hopeful and encouraging that this budget will be different. I have to say, sadly—I think “doom and gloom” are the words that my colleague from Peterborough said. Well, doom and gloom, sadly, is an \$11-billion deficit, and spending continually more than you bring in. You can't do it in your home budget, I don't think, or if you do, you've got better sources than I do. So why would this government be any different? Why would we not try to live within our means? Why would we not ensure that every single tax dollar is used effectively, wisely, and we won't have \$11 billion wasted on interest payments alone that could be going to the front line, could be creating jobs, could be giving hope for the future to our young people, could be giving hope for the future to our seniors and to every single citizen of this great province of Ontario?

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

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I've got to say I'm glad that our caucus has put forward this particular motion, because I think it speaks to two things: the last budget, and what we should be thinking about doing with the budget that's coming up.

It has been really interesting to watch over the last year. Kathleen Wynne and the Liberals went out of their way to try to say that they were different and they were the progressive party, and they were certainly not going to be anything like Tim Hudak. They spent the entire election taking a swipe at Tim Hudak and saying, “Imagine that. You're going to privatize parts of hydro. We wouldn't do that.” Then they ran around and said, “Oh, we're never going to touch the LCBO. Oh, no, we're not going to touch that either. It's Tim Hudak who wants to do that.” The best one of all was when they ran around and said, “Oh, my God, Tim Hudak wants to lay off 100,000 workers. We're opposed to that. We think that's wrong. You have to vote for us because you know us Liberals and our principles and what we stand for—that we would never do such a thing.”

1730

Now what do we find? The Liberals are a bunch of Tories in a hurry. They're outflanking the Conservatives. They should be charged with plagiarism for having stolen what was inside the Tory platform and running with it themselves, now that they're elected. They're Tories in a hurry, Speaker. They're so far right-wing, they're making the Conservatives look like left-wingers. And the sad part is that they don't believe it; they think that, in fact, they're progressive.

Well, let's look at what “progressive” is. They're doing P3s times five. Everything they can do to enhance public-private partnerships they're doing, to be able to build infrastructure, even though the auditor of Ontario has said we've wasted \$8 billion of our money doing something that we could have done cheaper if we had done it in-house.

Why are they doing it? I think it's for two reasons. One is, they're ideologically a bunch of right-wingers. That's the first part. The second thing is, they're able to off-book those investments, so they don't show up on the treasury on the year that the budget is actually being drafted. So they off-book the thing, and they say, “Here we are; we can spend a bunch more money.”

If you look at what they're doing with the privatization of hydro, if you take a look at what they're doing with the partial privatization of our beer and wine sales system, it's pretty darn simple. The problem is they've spent the bank dry over the last 12 years, they've made all kinds of decisions that have put Ontario in a position to be in a \$12-billion deficit, and now they're saying, “Oh, my God, we have a financial crisis. We need to balance the budget. What do we do now? Well, let's sell off our assets. If we can sell off our assets, that's going to allow us to have more money to go back and spend again.” It's akin, Mr. Speaker, to you having a house and the equity on the house is gone because you're mortgaged to the hilt; you have no more line of credit; you've maxed out all your credit cards; but you would love to have a brand new, wall-to-wall, colour TV that's going to cost you a couple of thousand bucks; and you say, “How do I raise the money for that? Sell the furniture.” Essentially, that's what these guys are doing. They're selling

the furniture in order to buy the colour TV. That's the analogy of what they're up to.

I just say, these guys are such a bunch of right-wingers. I look at Kathleen Wynne and I just feel bad for Mr. Hudak, because I think Mr. Hudak is now working with his legal counsel—as the Premier is working with her legal counsel—to figure out how he's going to put together his lawsuit when it comes to plagiarism that the Liberals have done in trying to do what it is the Conservatives said they would do if they became elected. What is really ironic about that is, none of these guys think that they're doing anything non-progressive. They believe themselves. They think they're a bunch of progressives. I'm sorry—

Interjection.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: What were you saying I should call him?

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Call him Premier Hudak.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Premier Hudak—right over there. I'm with you. That's pretty well where it's going.

What's really interesting is, if you listen to the Minister of the Environment, if you listen to the dean of the Legislature, if you listen to the new members of the House, they really think they're a bunch of progressives. They really think, "Oh, my God, we're so progressive."

Who's progressive who privatizes hydro; who privatizes our liquor control system; who sells off our assets off-book, by way of doing private partnerships and selling off our equity; who's going out and laying off workers by the tens of thousands?

If you look across the health care system, we're seeing the reduction of nurses. And we're going to find out at the end of this week if the government is going to go forward with what is rumoured to be a reduction of 2% to the GSNs to all our school boards. Put in simple English, they want to cut by 2% the amount of money that they transfer for each and every student that we fund in our system of education. Man, do you know what that means? That means school boards across this province will be laying—

Mr. Han Dong: Lack of enrolment.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: He says "lack of enrolment." Tell that to the Durham school board, which has an increase in enrolment, which has to lay off teachers—because they're already planning to lay people off, based on your 2% reduction to the GSNs.

I just remind my conservative Liberal friends across the way that if you're going to outflank the Conservatives on the right, you should be at least proud of what you do and call yourselves what you are. You are the Liberal Conservative Party of Ontario.

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

Hon. Glen R. Murray: You know, there's a big, big elephant in the room. It's got a \$600-million price tag on it.

In the last election, we put out a budget for which the third party—before they even read it, before the ink was even dry on it—had this tidy little press conference

downstairs, very well organized. Too bad they couldn't wrap their bus, and they had no campaign at all, but they had a tidy little press conference to say, "Well, it's not that the Liberal budget is too left-wing for us. It's that we think we can do better. We can find \$600 million in more cuts"—not \$6 million, not \$60 million—\$600 million.

So we went to the people of Ontario with a budget, not only a budget that had been debated around here but a budget that got debated in the election.

We have a problem with the third party, because that elephant—I can see it. It's usually somewhere between the Sergeant-at-Arms and the Speaker's chair. This poor unloved elephant—we're all waiting to find out what that \$600 million was.

Was it \$600 million coming out of education? They say, "No, no, no. We would never touch education." Is it \$600 million coming out of health care? "Oh, no, no, no. It's not coming out of health care."

Unfortunately, parliamentary language doesn't allow me to do it.

But, you know, it was an interesting election—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): I enjoy and love a spirited debate—

Hon. Glen R. Murray: Can we stop the clock, Mr. Speaker?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Can we stop the clock? Stop the clock, please.

But what I will encourage on the government side is the fact that—I'm having difficulty hearing the honourable member contribute to this debate, so I would ask that the members on his side please tone it down so that we can enjoy the continuance of his debate. Thank you.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Many of us who have been unlucky in love—of a male persuasion—know what a Dear John letter is. But in the last election, we discovered a new type of letter, which is what happens to people when they are unlucky in politics. It's a Dear Andrea letter. People—

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Point of order.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Point of order: I recognize the member from Nepean—Carleton.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: I think the member should withdraw that reference to the leader of the third party. I don't think it's appropriate.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Continue.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: Mr. Speaker, I don't mind giving the opposition time to interfere, but it might be nice if we stopped the clock.

Mr. Speaker, these letters—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): I appreciate the comments from the honourable minister, but my decision has been made. The inference is that you were questioning my decision. I would remind the minister not to do that.

Please continue on—

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls):—and I remind the deputy government House leader that there was a warning earlier today.

Please continue.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

These letters come from people like Sid Ryan, like, “Dear Andrea: I’m sorry your party has moved so far to the right, I can’t support you anymore.”

Or my two-time opponent in the election, Cathy Crowe: “Dear Andrea: I’m really sorry that you’ve somehow raced past Tim Hudak and the Conservatives to take a position that, after running for you in two elections, I’m going to go out and campaign for the Liberals next time,” or Judy Rebick, the intellectual heft of the left, signing letters to the leader.

1740

You know, in the entire history of leaders of parties in this House, I would like to write into history that the political equivalent of the Dear John letter is now the Dear Andrea letter. Now, I can understand—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): I appreciate the minister giving me lots of exercise this afternoon. I would ask that when you are referring to a member in this House, you refer to the member either by their title, if you’re referring to the member of the third party opposition, or you refer to the member as from their riding. Please follow those guidelines or I will end your debate.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

So what did we run on? Let’s just go through this idea that we were somehow, to use the word of one of the members opposite, “hornswoggled,” or the member for Hamilton East–Stoney Mountain, who said they were tricked. The member from Kitchener–Waterloo said that somehow—

Mr. John Yakabuski: Point of order.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): On a point of order, I recognize the member from—

Mr. John Yakabuski: If one member is expected to withdraw for using a word, the other member can’t be allowed to use the word in a descriptive way. I would think that he should be withdrawing it as well.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): I ask the member to withdraw, please.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: I withdraw, Mr. Speaker.

It’s interesting. The opposition cries democracy, that they never get time to debate, but I’ve never seen such harassment when I get up to speak. I guess I must be touching a nerve.

The challenge is a little interesting here, because if you look at former—what do you call a former NDP Premier? Well, Premier Harcourt, Premier Rae: What do you call them? You now call them Liberals, because you can’t find a leader from the third party who ever served in government for a length of time who didn’t shortly after leaving politics exit to join the party.

It’s the arrogance, Mr. Speaker. We were accused by the member from Kitchener–Waterloo of being arrogant.

But I’d ask you, is there anything more arrogant, that when a government presents a budget, says, “We are going to present that budget word for word, number to number, for the House”—we made that solemn commitment to the people of Ontario. We got elected. We presented the budget to the House, word for word and number for number. We were true to our word: every period, every punctuation mark. We presented that budget without change. To me, Mr. Speaker, there’s a word for that. That’s called integrity. And then there was another chance for the people of Ontario to cast their opinion on this government. It was called the Sudbury by-election. And what happened? They voted again to send the member, Mr. Thibeault, the MPP from Sudbury, to the House. So, Mr. Speaker, when they use the word “arrogance,” which I’ve heard them use now five times today—I kept track; five times they used that word—who, I may ask, is arrogant? Is it the party that does what it says, makes a commitment to the people of Ontario, then word for word, down to the punctuation, passes and does exactly what they committed to in the election, or the people who keep on telling Ontarians they got it wrong? They were wrong in Sudbury; they just didn’t understand the third party. They were wrong in the general election. “Clearly, we didn’t get our message out.”

They have been the third party for 20-plus years right now. How long is it going to take them to realize that the people of Ontario are right and you’re wrong? It might be suggested to you that it is arrogant to keep on telling 14 million people that they constantly get it wrong, because on this side of the House, we actually think the people of Ontario get it right. Sometimes we lose and sometimes we win, but we don’t tell the people we work for that they constantly get it wrong.

So why would they actually be voting for us? Maybe it’s because we built 728 new schools. Maybe it’s because we repaired 700 schools—and maybe because in those constituencies that are now represented by people on this side, that’s where a lot of those schools were. They slowly stopped voting for the parties opposite because, after 40 or 50 years of waiting to get their schools fixed, they got their schools fixed.

Our education budget has been increased by 50%.

Hon. Jeff Leal: Fifty?

Hon. Glen R. Murray: Fifty per cent, and our hospital budgets by 55%, with 19 new hospitals, some of them in what were formerly Conservative and NDP ridings, like the member from Beaches–East York’s, like the member from Halton’s, like the member from Burlington’s. I could go on, but it would get a little boring because there are so many new members over here. That makes it a little boring.

We don’t actually think that’s trickery or some of the words that I wouldn’t use which they got away with, Mr. Speaker, which are unparliamentary. You and I would be most upset if those words were repeated.

I think the people of Ontario are pretty smart. Every year that we have had a reasonably strong economy—and

we did not inherit one—we have been in a surplus situation. Every year that we've set a deficit target, we have met it. We are down from \$24 billion to \$12 billion.

They keep on running off, “\$29 million a day is what it costs to service the debt.” Let's just take a minute and break that down. What is that spent on? It's like the mortgage on your house. If you think the mortgage on your house is a waste of money, I guess you'd be rich enough to pay it in cash. But we don't build highways like the 427 or the 401 expansion. We actually use debt financing as a rational tool of government. All the hospitals down the street here have been rebuilt and expanded. We put that on debt.

We have been prudent managers of debt. Whether it's highways, public schools, northern roads, new subway and rapid transit lines, marine infrastructure, new court-houses or social service agencies, the capital program of this government is a reasonable one.

We have for 200 years now in Ontario used debt financing, and we are committed, in 2017-18, to getting back to balance. It's a perfectly reasonable proposition which the poor folks getting Dear John letters of a certain sort might want to pay attention to.

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

Ms. Catherine Fife: It's really interesting, Mr. Speaker. We just came from this wonderful event honouring Stephen Lewis, and he talked about a time in politics when, in this Legislature, there could be an honest discourse and debate about the state of Ontario. This motion actually addresses the real, lived experience of people in Ontario.

When the new member from Beaches–East York gets up and compares the state of Ontario to having a T-ball and trying to hit it out of the park, it really demeans the debate and the profession. That's why people don't have faith in this place and in politics.

The motion that we brought to the floor today is very reasonable, actually. It asks the Liberal Party to take an honest look at where you are going, because the privatization agenda in the province of Ontario is running this province into the ground, and you are doing that with intention. It's not like you're doing it by accident; you're doing it with intention.

The 50 nurses who are being fired at CHEO, the state of long-term care in the province of Ontario—it's embarrassing that seniors are getting such poor care under the leadership—the 42 nurses in Sudbury, 22 nurses in Cambridge, 15 nurses in Leamington, 18,000 nursing hours in New Liskeard: These cuts are real. For us, we're trying to address this issue of, when is a cut really a cut in the mind of a Liberal government? There are going to be people on the front lawn all spring. They're going to come, they're going to raise their voices and we're going to support them.

The Auditor General found the money for you. That is what's so frustrating. We don't need to find \$600 million in privatizing IT services or privatizing the way that you actually deliver infrastructure and public services. She

found it for you. She's an independent officer of this Legislature. All she has met with from this government is complete disdain—complete disdain. One member even yelled across and said she doesn't count properly. This is the Auditor General. She found the money for you. You need to wake up and recognize that if you do not stop the privatization agenda in this province, you will ruin this province of Ontario. You will do that.

So we brought this motion to the floor of this Legislature to raise the awareness of it, and all we got was little games and letters. Really, you just proved that the arrogance is real and alive and kicking in the province of Ontario.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Please be seated.

Ms. Fife has moved opposition day motion number 2. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I heard a no.

All those in favour of the motion will please say “aye.”

All those in disapproval of the motion, please say “nay.”

In my opinion, the nays have it.

Call in the members. There will be a 10-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1751 to 1801.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): All members take their seats, please.

All those in favour, please stand to be recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Armstrong, Teresa J.	French, Jennifer K.	Natyshak, Taras
Bisson, Gilles	Gretzky, Lisa	Tabuns, Peter
Fife, Catherine	Hatfield, Percy	Taylor, Monique
Forster, Cindy	Mantha, Michael	

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): All those opposed will please stand and be recognized by the Clerk.

Nays

Albanese, Laura	Gravelle, Michael	McMahon, Eleanor
Anderson, Granville	Harris, Michael	Meilleur, Madeleine
Bailey, Robert	Hoggarth, Ann	Milczyn, Peter Z.
Baker, Yvan	Hoskins, Eric	Moridi, Reza
Balkissoon, Bas	Hunter, Mitzie	Munro, Julia
Ballard, Chris	Jaczek, Helena	Murray, Glen R.
Berardinetti, Lorenzo	Jones, Sylvia	Naidoo-Harris, Indra
Bradley, James J.	Kiwala, Sophie	Potts, Arthur
Chan, Michael	Kwintar, Monte	Rinaldi, Lou
Chiarelli, Bob	Lalonde, Marie-France	Scott, Laurie
Clark, Steve	Leal, Jeff	Sergio, Mario
Colle, Mike	MacCharles, Tracy	Smith, Todd
Coteau, Michael	MacLeod, Lisa	Sousa, Charles
Crack, Grant	Malhi, Harinder	Thibault, Glenn
Damerla, Dipika	Mangat, Amrit	Vernile, Daiene
Delaney, Bob	Martins, Cristina	Walker, Bill
Dhillon, Vic	Martow, Gila	Wilson, Jim
Dickson, Joe	Matthews, Deborah	Wong, Soo
Dong, Han	Mauro, Bill	Yakabuski, John
Flynn, Kevin Daniel	McDonnell, Jim	Zimmer, David
Fraser, John	McGarry, Kathryn	

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 11; the nays are 63.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): I declare the motion defeated.

Motion negatived.

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

ADJOURNMENT DEBATE

BY-ELECTION IN SUDBURY

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): We do have a late show, so I would ask the members, if you're not involved, to please disperse quickly and quietly.

The member for Timmins–James Bay has given notice of dissatisfaction with the answer to a question given this morning by the Deputy Premier. The member has up to five minutes to debate the matter, and the Deputy Premier may reply for up to five minutes.

The member from Timmins–James Bay.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I didn't know I had such power to be able to clear a room as effectively as we just did.

I just want to come back to the question, because we have now, for about 140 times, asked essentially the same question to the Deputy Premier and the Premier, over and over again, having to do with the Sudbury election bribery scandal.

Is anybody going to be left to answer the question? Oh, okay. There we go.

I'd just say again, Mr. Speaker, for 140 times now, we've stood in this House and we've asked essentially the same question, and the question is having to do with the Sudbury bribery scandal.

To recap, Mr. Olivier, who was the candidate in the previous election, had declared that he was interested in running for the nomination in the Sudbury by-election. Mr. Olivier made sure to make that known, and in the end, Mr. Olivier declared that in fact he was going to be a candidate.

What ended up happening is, the government decided to offer Mr. Olivier a job, or an appointment, in order to get him to stand down, to not run for office. We have that not by hearsay, Mr. Speaker. We have that because of the tapes that Mr. Olivier made of his conversations with both Pat Sorbara and Gerry Lougheed, who both went there in order to meet, to talk to him about not running. They were on tape, so we have the voices. Nobody is saying it wasn't them that said these things.

What was said was simply this: They were there on behalf of the Premier. They were there to make an offer to Mr. Olivier—to nominate Mr. Thibeault, the candidate that they wanted to appoint to run in the upcoming by-election. If he was to do that, they would offer him a job.

Clearly, Mr. Speaker, it's a contravention of the law, because the election law says that once a candidate has

declared that they want to run for a nomination, you can't offer a job and you can't offer an appointment as a way of dissuading them to run or not run. So there was a clear breach of the Election Act.

I filed a complaint on behalf of New Democrats with Elections Ontario. The Chief Electoral Officer did an investigation, and the Chief Electoral Officer came back and said there was an apparent breach of the law. "Apparent breach" means exactly that: There is enough there to justify charges possibly being laid. Now it is before the Ministry of the Attorney General to decide if charges are going to be laid.

At the same time, the Ontario Provincial Police have been doing an investigation, because both the opposition parties sent letters to the Ontario Provincial Police saying, "We believe there's a Criminal Code violation."

Prior to the tapes being released, the OPP came back and said no, there is no evidence of that at this point. But once the tapes became public, they decided that, in fact, they were going to investigate, because again, the opposition parties sent in letters to the commissioner of the Ontario Provincial Police and said, "Now, in light of these tapes, we believe that there is a contravention of the Criminal Code." So they're now doing the investigation.

1810

The question really becomes this—and I'm hoping that the parliamentary assistant can answer this specific question: Either Mrs. Sorbara and Mr. Lougheed were acting on their own—and if that was the case, then why doesn't the Premier fire those people for having done something which is in apparent breach of the law? It would stand to reason that if somebody did something and they didn't have the permission to do it and the Premier knew nothing about it, then she should fire these people. I think it would be pretty clear. Or is it the case that in fact the Premier ordered these people to do that? What's clear on the tapes—and I think it's the latter—the tape says, "I'm here on behalf of the Premier." They both spoke about trying to do what the Premier wanted. So, clearly, there had to be some kind of discussion between Mrs. Sorbara and Mr. Lougheed, in some kind of way, with the Premier for them to go and do this, which means that the Premier, in the end, will be in apparent breach of the act, once the OPP is finished the investigation, if they're able to prove that.

I put the question back to the parliamentary assistant: Why is it that this government has not done what it should have done, which is to take responsibility for this and say to these two individuals, "Step aside while the investigation is ongoing"? Then, based on the charges laid, if they're laid or not, and depending on the result of the charges if they're laid—that they are either permanently gone, or they come back if they're found to be nothing. To this point, the government has never answered the question as to why it is that they have not taken that position.

So I ask the parliamentary assistant again: Why is it that Pat Sorbara and Mr. Lougheed are still in the positions that they hold, making decisions on behalf of

Ontarians, at a time when they both have been found in contravention of the act and are being investigated by the Ontario Provincial Police?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): I now refer to the parliamentary assistant, the member from Etobicoke Centre, for an up-to-five-minute reply.

Mr. Yvan Baker: I will be relatively brief.

I will say that the Premier takes this matter very seriously. The Premier has spoken to this issue repeatedly here before all of us.

This investigation is independent of government and independent of this House. If you read what the Chief Electoral Officer recently stated, he said, "I am neither deciding to prosecute a matter nor determining anyone's guilt or innocence. Those decisions are respectively for prosecutors and judges." We, as the government, will co-operate fully with that investigation.

The opposition knows that it's inappropriate for us to comment on an ongoing investigation. In fact, here's what the member from Timmins–James Bay recently said: "You do have a larger responsibility to make sure you're careful in your use of your words so that you don't interfere in any way."

So the opposition knows that it's inappropriate for us to comment on the ongoing investigation. We're not going to do that. But the Premier and the government will continue to co-operate fully with that investigation.

BY-ELECTION IN SUDBURY

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): The member from Windsor–Tecumseh has also filed dissatisfaction with the response given by the Minister of the Environment and Climate Change. The member from Windsor–Tecumseh has up to five minutes.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: During question period, most people in Ontario expect their elected representatives to stand up in this chamber and either ask a question or give an answer to a question that has been put to them directly. It's common courtesy. We may not like the question, but the voters, especially those watching these proceedings at home, are engaged and feel that the question is being asked on their behalf. Therefore, they expect an answer to be given to the question that has been put. That didn't happen on Wednesday, the 11th of March. I asked the Minister of the Environment and Climate Change when he was first briefed about the plan to offer Andrew Olivier a job in order for him to get out of the Premier's way in the Sudbury by-election, so she could appoint someone without that person having to sell membership cards for the nomination battle. My question was not answered.

I tried again in the supplementary question, reminding the minister that he had a vested interest because his parliamentary assistant, the new member from Sudbury, was at the centre of the scandal that's under investigation by the OPP anti-rackets squad—again, no answer. We had deflection about the loss of a large percentage of the

apple crop in southwestern Ontario, but no answer to a simple question. Answers should be given to the questions posed.

Speaker, I've read the transcripts of those taped conversations at the heart of the Sudbury bribery scandal. Mr. Lougheed meets with Mr. Olivier in person for what he calls an eyeball-to-eyeball conversation. The Premier and Ms. Sorbara have been talking, and Mr. Lougheed says, "So I come to you, on behalf of the Premier, and on behalf of, yes, Thibeault"—that being the new member from Sudbury, Glenn Thibeault. Mr. Lougheed clearly states that he's there to do the bidding of the Premier and Mr. Thibeault, to ask Mr. Olivier to step down and even nominate Mr. Thibeault.

He states very clearly that the Premier wants to talk to Mr. Olivier as well, and he says, "They would like to present to you options in terms of appointments, jobs, whatever..."

They agree it will be a tough decision for Mr. Olivier to step aside for Mr. Thibeault, and Mr. Lougheed says, "[I]f you take the high road on this, what is your reward?" "[W]hat's in it for you? ... [W]hat do we give to Andrew Olivier?" And he admits he's already raised the question and the Premier wants to have that conversation. But Mr. Lougheed says that "she doesn't want to be told to eff off"—and that's all in the transcript, Speaker.

For her part, Ms. Sorbara says, "You've been asked by the leader and the Premier to make a decision to step aside to allow Glenn to have ... the opportunity uncontested." She suggests she doesn't want this conversation to be seen as Mr. Olivier being offered a consolation prize. There is committee work available and "if, for example, you wanted to be an executive of the Ontario Liberal Party" or on a government accessibility committee or a government board—then, Speaker, the discussion rolls around to the possibility of a job working in the constituency office of Mr. Thibeault.

And Ms. Sorbara says, "Okay so, we talked about that, and I think Glenn would actually be very open to that." And then she says, "[A]ctually Glenn said that a week or so ago, when we were chatting," but he didn't want Mr. Olivier to think being a constituency assistant was a consolation prize either.

Ms. Sorbara says later: "[W]hether it's a full time or a part time job in a constit office, whether it is appointments, supports, or commissions, whether it is also going on the exec..."

Speaker, one last point from these transcripts. You'll recall that Mr. Lougheed says, right off the top, "[I] come to you on, behalf of the Premier..." He isn't there on his own initiative. He's the Premier's voice at that meeting—the Premier, by the way, who likes to hold herself up as a champion of women's rights and as someone who encourages women to be more involved by seeking political office. Her voice in Sudbury, Mr. Lougheed, in the course of this recorded conversation, disparages a former mayor of Sudbury, Marianne Matichuk, who, by the way, was about to announce her intention to seek that nomination.

Mr. Lougheed refers to her as “that woman” and tells Mr. Olivier that she should “just ... get lost.” Well, Speaker, she didn’t get lost. The Premier’s voice in Sudbury, the man who is having this conversation with Mr. Olivier, is saying that she should get lost. Why isn’t the Premier saying to Mr. Lougheed, “You’re the one who should get lost, buddy”?

Will the real Kathleen please stand up? Kathleen Wynne, stand up for the women in this province who wish to run for public office, stand up for your ministers and tell them to answer questions in question period, and stand up for the truth. That’s all we’re asking.

Thank you.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): The Minister of the Environment and Climate Change.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: Thanks, Mr. Speaker. We take this matter very seriously on this side of the House. The investigation is independent of government and independent of this House, as it well should be.

Mr. Speaker, I think the Premier has answered this question more than enough in this House. Thank you very much.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Since it is well past the hour and our late shows are now complete, this House stands adjourned until 9 o’clock tomorrow morning.

The House adjourned at 1819.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO
ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lieutenant Governor / Lieutenante-gouverneure: Hon. / L'hon. Elizabeth Dowdeswell, OC, OOnt.

Speaker / Président: Hon. / L'hon. Dave Levac

Clerk / Greffière: Deborah Deller

Clerks-at-the-Table / Greffiers parlementaires: Todd Decker, Tonia Grannum, Trevor Day, Anne Stokes

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Anderson, Granville (LIB)	Durham	
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Chiarelli, Hon. / L'hon. Bob (LIB)	Ottawa West–Nepean / Ottawa-Ouest–Nepean	Minister of Energy / Ministre de l'Énergie
Clark, Steve (PC)	Leeds–Grenville	Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire de l'opposition officielle
Colle, Mike (LIB)	Eglinton–Lawrence	
Coteau, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Don Valley East / Don Valley-Est	Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport / Ministre du Tourisme, de la Culture et du Sport Minister Responsible for the 2015 Pan and Parapan American Games / Ministre responsable des Jeux panaméricains et parapanaméricains de 2015
Crack, Grant (LIB)	Glengarry–Prescott–Russell	
Damerla, Hon. / L'hon. Dipika (LIB)	Mississauga East–Cooksville / Mississauga-Est–Cooksville	Associate Minister of Health and Long-Term Care (Long-Term Care and Wellness) / Ministre associée de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée (Soins de longue durée et Promotion du mieux-être) Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille Minister of Transportation / Ministre des Transports
Del Duca, Hon. / L'hon. Steven (LIB)	Vaughan	
Delaney, Bob (LIB)	Mississauga–Streetsville	
Dhillon, Vic (LIB)	Brampton West / Brampton-Ouest	
Dickson, Joe (LIB)	Ajax–Pickering	
DiNovo, Cheri (NDP)	Parkdale–High Park	
Dong, Han (LIB)	Trinity–Spadina	
Duguid, Hon. / L'hon. Brad (LIB)	Scarborough Centre / Scarborough-Centre	Minister of Economic Development, Employment and Infrastructure / Ministre du Développement économique, de l'Emploi et de l'Infrastructure
Dunlop, Garfield (PC)	Simcoe North / Simcoe-Nord	
Elliott, Christine (PC)	Whitby–Oshawa	Deputy Leader, Official Opposition / Chef adjointe de l'opposition officielle
Fedeli, Victor (PC)	Nipissing	
Fife, Catherine (NDP)	Kitchener–Waterloo	

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Flynn, Hon. / L'hon. Kevin Daniel (LIB)	Oakville	Minister of Labour / Ministre du Travail
Forster, Cindy (NDP)	Welland	
Fraser, John (LIB)	Ottawa South / Ottawa-Sud	
French, Jennifer K. (NDP)	Oshawa	
Gates, Wayne (NDP)	Niagara Falls	
Gélinas, France (NDP)	Nickel Belt	
Gravelle, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Thunder Bay–Superior North / Thunder Bay–Superior-Nord	Minister of Northern Development and Mines / Ministre du Développement du Nord et des Mines
Gretzky, Lisa (NDP)	Windsor West / Windsor-Ouest	
Hardeman, Ernie (PC)	Oxford	
Harris, Michael (PC)	Kitchener–Conestoga	
Hatfield, Percy (NDP)	Windsor–Tecumseh	
Hillier, Randy (PC)	Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington	
Hoggarth, Ann (LIB)	Barrie	
Horwath, Andrea (NDP)	Hamilton Centre / Hamilton-Centre	Leader, Recognized Party / Chef de parti reconnu Leader, New Democratic Party of Ontario / Chef du Nouveau parti démocratique de l'Ontario
Hoskins, Hon. / L'hon. Eric (LIB)	St. Paul's	Minister of Health and Long-Term Care / Ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée
Hudak, Tim (PC)	Niagara West–Glanbrook / Niagara- Ouest–Glanbrook	
Hunter, Hon. / L'hon. Mitzie (LIB)	Scarborough–Guildwood	Associate Minister of Finance (Ontario Retirement Pension Plan) / Ministre associée des Finances (Régime de retraite de la province de l'Ontario)
		Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille
Jaczek, Hon. / L'hon. Helena (LIB)	Oak Ridges–Markham	Minister of Community and Social Services / Ministre des Services sociaux et communautaires
Jones, Sylvia (PC)	Dufferin–Caledon	
Kiwala, Sophie (LIB)	Kingston and the Islands / Kingston et les Îles	
Kwinter, Monte (LIB)	York Centre / York-Centre	
Lalonde, Marie-France (LIB)	Ottawa–Orléans	
Leal, Hon. / L'hon. Jeff (LIB)	Peterborough	Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs / Ministre de l'Agriculture, de l'Alimentation et des Affaires rurales
Levac, Hon. / L'hon. Dave (LIB)	Brant	Speaker / Président de l'Assemblée législative
MacCharles, Hon. / L'hon. Tracy (LIB)	Pickering–Scarborough East / Pickering–Scarborough-Est	Minister of Children and Youth Services / Ministre des Services à l'enfance et à la jeunesse Minister Responsible for Women's Issues / Ministre déléguée à la Condition féminine
MacLaren, Jack (PC)	Carleton–Mississippi Mills	
MacLeod, Lisa (PC)	Nepean–Carleton	
Malhi, Harinder (LIB)	Brampton–Springdale	
Mangat, Amrit (LIB)	Mississauga–Brampton South / Mississauga–Brampton-Sud	
Mantha, Michael (NDP)	Algoma–Manitoulin	
Martins, Cristina (LIB)	Davenport	
Martow, Gila (PC)	Thornhill	
Matthews, Hon. / L'hon. Deborah (LIB)	London North Centre / London- Centre-Nord	Deputy Premier / Vice-première ministre Minister Responsible for the Poverty Reduction Strategy / Ministre responsable de la Stratégie de réduction de la pauvreté President of the Treasury Board / Présidente du Conseil du Trésor Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry / Ministre des Richesses naturelles et des Forêts
Mauro, Hon. / L'hon. Bill (LIB)	Thunder Bay–Atikokan	
McDonell, Jim (PC)	Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry	
McGarry, Kathryn (LIB)	Cambridge	
McMahon, Eleanor (LIB)	Burlington	
McMeekin, Hon. / L'hon. Ted (LIB)	Ancaster–Dundas–Flamborough– Westdale	Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / Ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement
McNaughton, Monte (PC)	Lambton–Kent–Middlesex	
Meilleur, Hon. / L'hon. Madeleine (LIB)	Ottawa–Vanier	Attorney General / Procureure générale Minister Responsible for Francophone Affairs / Ministre déléguée aux Affaires francophones

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Milczyn, Peter Z. (LIB)	Etobicoke–Lakeshore	
Miller, Norm (PC)	Parry Sound–Muskoka	
Miller, Paul (NDP)	Hamilton East–Stoney Creek / Hamilton-Est–Stoney Creek	Third Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Troisième vice-président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Moridi, Hon. / L'hon. Reza (LIB)	Richmond Hill	Minister of Research and Innovation / Ministre de la Recherche et de l'Innovation Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities / Ministre de la Formation et des Collèges et Universités
Munro, Julia (PC)	York–Simcoe	Deputy Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjointe de l'opposition officielle
Murray, Hon. / L'hon. Glen R. (LIB)	Toronto Centre / Toronto-Centre	Minister of the Environment and Climate Change / Ministre de l'Environnement et de l'Action en matière de changement climatique
Naidoo-Harris, Indira (LIB)	Halton	
Naqvi, Hon. / L'hon. Yasir (LIB)	Ottawa Centre / Ottawa-Centre	Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services / Ministre de la Sécurité communautaire et des Services correctionnels Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire du gouvernement
Natyshak, Taras (NDP)	Essex	
Nicholls, Rick (PC)	Chatham-Kent–Essex	Second Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Deuxième vice-président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Orazietti, Hon. / L'hon. David (LIB)	Sault Ste. Marie	Minister of Government and Consumer Services / Ministre des Services gouvernementaux et des Services aux consommateurs
Pettapiece, Randy (PC)	Perth–Wellington	
Potts, Arthur (LIB)	Beaches–East York	
Qaadri, Shafiq (LIB)	Etobicoke North / Etobicoke-Nord	
Rinaldi, Lou (LIB)	Northumberland–Quinte West	
Sandals, Hon. / L'hon. Liz (LIB)	Guelph	Minister of Education / Ministre de l'Éducation
Sattler, Peggy (NDP)	London West / London-Ouest	
Scott, Laurie (PC)	Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock	
Sergio, Hon. / L'hon. Mario (LIB)	York West / York-Ouest	Minister Responsible for Seniors Affairs Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille
Singh, Jagmeet (NDP)	Bramalea–Gore–Malton	
Smith, Todd (PC)	Prince Edward–Hastings	
Sousa, Hon. / L'hon. Charles (LIB)	Mississauga South / Mississauga-Sud	Minister of Finance / Ministre des Finances
Tabuns, Peter (NDP)	Toronto–Danforth	
Takhar, Harinder S. (LIB)	Mississauga–Erindale	
Taylor, Monique (NDP)	Hamilton Mountain	
Thibeault, Glenn (LIB)	Sudbury	
Thompson, Lisa M. (PC)	Huron–Bruce	
Vanthof, John (NDP)	Timiskaming–Cochrane	
Vernile, Daiene (LIB)	Kitchener Centre / Kitchener-Centre	
Walker, Bill (PC)	Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound	
Wilson, Jim (PC)	Simcoe–Grey	Leader, Official Opposition / Chef de l'opposition officielle
Wong, Soo (LIB)	Scarborough–Agincourt	
Wynne, Hon. / L'hon. Kathleen O. (LIB)	Don Valley West / Don Valley-Ouest	Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs / Ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales Premier / Première ministre Leader, Liberal Party of Ontario / Chef du Parti libéral de l'Ontario
Yakabuski, John (PC)	Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke	
Yurek, Jeff (PC)	Elgin–Middlesex–London	
Zimmer, Hon. / L'hon. David (LIB)	Willowdale	Minister of Aboriginal Affairs / Ministre des Affaires autochtones

**STANDING AND SELECT COMMITTEES OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
COMITÉS PERMANENTS ET SPÉCIAUX DE L'ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE**

Standing Committee on Estimates / Comité permanent des budgets des dépenses

Chair / Président: Vacant
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Monique Taylor
Bas Balkissoon, Chris Ballard
Grant Crack, Cheri DiNovo
Han Dong, Michael Harris
Randy Hillier, Sophie Kiwala
Monique Taylor
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Katch Koch

**Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs /
Comité permanent des finances et des affaires économiques**

Chair / Présidente: Soo Wong
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Peter Z. Milczyn
Laura Albanese, Yvan Baker
Victor Fedeli, Catherine Fife
Ann Hoggarth, Monte McNaughton
Peter Z. Milczyn, Daiene Vernile
Soo Wong
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Katch Koch

**Standing Committee on General Government / Comité
permanent des affaires gouvernementales**

Chair / Président: Grant Crack
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Joe Dickson
Mike Colle, Grant Crack
Joe Dickson, Lisa Gretzky
Ann Hoggarth, Sophie Kiwala
Eleanor McMahon, Lisa M. Thompson
Jeff Yurek
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Sylwia Przewdziecki

**Standing Committee on Government Agencies / Comité
permanent des organismes gouvernementaux**

Chair / Président: John Fraser
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Cristina Martins
Vic Dhillon, John Fraser
Wayne Gates, Marie-France Lalonde
Harinder Malhi, Cristina Martins
Jim McDonnell, Randy Pettapiece
Lou Rinaldi
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Sylwia Przewdziecki

**Standing Committee on Justice Policy / Comité permanent de
la justice**

Chair / Président: Shafiq Qadri
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Lorenzo Berardinetti
Lorenzo Berardinetti, Bob Delaney
Jack MacLaren, Michael Mantha
Cristina Martins, Indira Naidoo-Harris
Arthur Potts, Shafiq Qadri
Todd Smith
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Tamara Pomanski

**Standing Committee on the Legislative Assembly / Comité
permanent de l'Assemblée législative**

Chair / Président: Toby Barrett
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Garfield Dunlop
Granville Anderson, Bas Balkissoon
Chris Ballard, Toby Barrett
Garfield Dunlop, Eleanor McMahon
Laurie Scott, Jagmeet Singh
Soo Wong
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Trevor Day

**Standing Committee on Public Accounts / Comité permanent
des comptes publics**

Chair / Président: Ernie Hardeman
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Lisa MacLeod
Han Dong, John Fraser
Ernie Hardeman, Percy Hatfield
Lisa MacLeod, Harinder Malhi
Julia Munro, Arthur Potts
Lou Rinaldi
Committee Clerk / Greffier: William Short

**Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills / Comité
permanent des règlements et des projets de loi d'intérêt privé**

Chair / Présidente: Indira Naidoo-Harris
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Kathryn McGarry
Robert Bailey, Lorenzo Berardinetti
Jennifer K. French, Monte Kwinter
Amrit Mangat, Kathryn McGarry
Indira Naidoo-Harris, Daiene Vernile
Bill Walker
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Valerie Quioc Lim

**Standing Committee on Social Policy / Comité permanent de
la politique sociale**

Chair / Président: Peter Tabuns
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Jagmeet Singh
Granville Anderson, Vic Dhillon
Christine Elliott, Marie-France Lalonde
Amrit Mangat, Gila Martow
Kathryn McGarry, Jagmeet Singh
Peter Tabuns
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Valerie Quioc Lim

**Select Committee on Sexual Violence and Harassment /
Comité spécial de la violence et du harcèlement à caractère
sexuel**

Chair / Présidente: Daiene Vernile
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Laurie Scott
Han Dong, Randy Hillier
Marie-France Lalonde, Harinder Malhi
Kathryn McGarry, Eleanor McMahon
Taras Natyshak, Peggy Sattler
Laurie Scott, Daiene Vernile
Committee Clerk / Greffier: William Short

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