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Wednesday 22 April 2015

Mercredi 22 avril 2015

Speaker
Honourable Dave Levac

Clerk
Deborah Deller

Président
L'honorable Dave Levac

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
OF ONTARIO

Wednesday 22 April 2015

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE
DE L'ONTARIO

Mercredi 22 avril 2015

The House met at 0900.

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

Prayers.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

INFRASTRUCTURE FOR JOBS
AND PROSPERITY ACT, 2015

LOI DE 2015 SUR L'INFRASTRUCTURE
AU SERVICE DE L'EMPLOI
ET DE LA PROSPÉRITÉ

Resuming the debate adjourned on April 16, 2015, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 6, An Act to enact the Infrastructure for Jobs and Prosperity Act, 2015 / Projet de loi 6, Loi édictant la Loi de 2015 sur l'infrastructure au service de l'emploi et de la prospérité.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): When we last discussed this issue the member from Newmarket–Aurora had the floor. We are now into questions and comments.

Mr. John Yakabuski: It's my pleasure to address the speech of the member from Newmarket–Aurora. We all know how important infrastructure is to our economy and how it translates into jobs when those infrastructure projects are going to be initiated and completed. So it's great that the government is bringing forth legislation, but what we really need to see is a concrete, laid-out plan as to what they're going to do with infrastructure here in the province of Ontario, because we hear the clarion call from municipalities all over Ontario, how we are all struggling with an infrastructure deficit.

This government has a history over the past 12 years of doing things on paper—because that's what these bills are; they're on paper—and then not following through with them. We'll have to see what happens with this bill and see if it's an exception to some of the other pieces of legislation that have not been followed through with in the past.

In my riding of Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke, one of the biggest challenges we have is we have the Trans-Canada Highway going through it but it's not four lanes throughout the riding. We need to see some more action on that. I know it's under progress right now, the Highway 417 expansion through Arnprior and now moving beyond Arnprior, but it is painfully slow. People in my riding want to see some real, concrete—no pun intended;

asphalt will work, too—action on this particular project because it is of vital importance, not only from a traffic safety point of view, which is clearly paramount and should be and always is for the ministry, but also as an economic development tool for my riding of Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke. We'd like to see some further action on that as quickly as possible.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Further questions or comments?

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: Infrastructure is one of the pillars that drives the economy. People need infrastructure to get around to their work, their appointments, everyday life. There were many promises made by this Liberal government with regard to infrastructure and transit. KW, or Kitchener–Waterloo: They were promised a bullet train. Niagara Falls, the member from Niagara Falls: They were promised transit as well, GO train services. London–Fanshawe: The city of London, which is a great city, is facing transportation concerns, and we were promised a bullet train. All these promises that came about—there was never a plan of how to fund them. So we're very interested to know how the government has pre-empted promises without a plan to actually fund transit.

We don't believe in privatizing hydro as a way to finance transit. We've had many suggestions to this government of how to do that. One of those was closing corporate tax loopholes. That was a billion dollars of funding that could actually go into projects for transit and infrastructure. So it's disappointing that this bill doesn't have that vision of how to actually enforce what it's proposing.

Again, it's a bill that's got an idea. The idea is great—when it comes to ideas, the Liberals are full of them—but we'd like to see some funding attached to those ideas that's actually concrete and not privatizing hydro, where people will end up paying higher rates in their hydro, which people don't want in my riding of London–Fanshawe and people don't want in London. They want to keep our public facility services like hydro public so that we have oversight and transparency and they're not going to be gouged for a necessity of life.

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

Mr. Mike Colle: Just to do my two minutes here: It's just noteworthy, if you compare Ontario's money on the ground, in terms of infrastructure, to the incredible sleight of hand by the federal budget yesterday—

Mr. John Yakabuski: It's not their responsibility, Michael. You know that.

Mr. Mike Colle: They committed \$1 billion for all of Canada for transit. We just announced \$1.6 billion for the light rail line between Brampton and Mississauga. So I don't know how Hamilton or anybody is going to get any money. It's \$1 billion for all of Canada, whereas we're putting \$130 billion over the next 10 years. So we've got no partner in Ottawa.

We've got the Trans-Canada Highway system. They spend no money for the Trans-Canada—did you know that, Mr. Speaker? The Trans-Canada Highway: There's no federal money in it. So it's all a matter of—

Mr. Randy Hillier: Point of order.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Stop the clock. Point of order.

Mr. Randy Hillier: We are speaking to Bill 6, not the federal budget. We should be keeping our comments to Bill 6.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): If I feel that the member from Eglinton–Lawrence is wandering, I'll certainly inform him. Thank you.

Continue.

Mr. Mike Colle: About our infrastructure in Ontario—one day I'd like to see an opposition member in the Tories actually say something nearly critical of their federal cousins. Just once I'd like to see one member.

The fact is, the people of Ontario spend and get most of their infrastructure money, almost 95%, from the provincial coffers. We need a partner if we're going to go ahead with helping all these infrastructure projects that are needed across Ontario. I know this really hurts the puppets over here who always defend their friends in Ottawa. For once, stand up for the people of Ontario and our infrastructure needs. We need sewers, roads, highways repaired; we need public transit, and they are silent, always standing up for their federal cousins. Once in a while, stand up and tell the truth about being—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Thank you. Comments?

0910

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Speaking of telling the truth—I know that would be unusual for that side, Speaker—let me tell you what we actually saw in the budget. Last year in the budget we had a sentence that told us exactly what they intend to do with their asset sale. It's not going into infrastructure whatsoever. In the budget, it said they "may" put a "portion" into the Trillium Trust. Our party brought forward amendments that said you "must" put it "all" into the Trillium Trust. First the government voted down the word "must," so now they only have "may" put it in, and then they voted down the word "all," and they left the word "portion." So instead of all the money going into the Trillium Trust, now they may put some or none of it in, but they don't have to put all of it in and they don't have to put any of it in. That's what these people voted for. That's the amendment.

Speaker, we took it one step further, and we said, "We want an amendment that has the Auditor General looking, within 90 days of the sale of any asset, and reporting to this Legislature what was sold, how much was

received and where the money went." These guys voted it down; that's what they did. That is the lack of transparency and openness. That's what is happening to the sale of GM shares; that's what is happening to this fire sale of Hydro One; that's what is happening to their planned sale of the LCBO. It's all about squeezing money out to try to balance the budget. It's not about infrastructure.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Newmarket–Aurora has two minutes.

Mr. Chris Ballard: I'm thankful to hear comments from members from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke, London–Fanshawe, Eglinton–Lawrence and Nipissing.

I think my colleague from Eglinton–Lawrence hit the nail on the head in terms of the sleight-of-hand federal budget. I'm not going to spend any more time on that, because I think the public understands that budget for what it is.

I do want to say that this bill, Bill 6, represents our government's priority for building Ontario up by investing in people's talents and skills, building new public infrastructure, and creating a dynamic business climate. We know that there will be \$130 billion spent on public infrastructure over the next 10 years. That, obviously, is one of the biggest spends on infrastructure in the history of this province. If we look back at the history of this province, that is one of the key things that has made Ontario great. The building of the 400-series highways, the building of the railroads: They've all worked to make Ontario very prosperous, and we need to continue to invest in those. It's unfortunate that the bulk of that falls on the shoulders of Ontario taxpayers.

The Conference Board of Canada has told us that every dollar that Ontario invests in public infrastructure raises Ontario's GDP by \$1.14 in the near term, and our own studies have shown that that expands to \$3.10 long-term, so it's a significant investment going forward.

Bill 6, if passed, would require our government and future governments to regularly prepare long-term infrastructure plans so that we don't get caught in the deficit we're in today.

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

Mr. Randy Hillier: It's a pleasure to be here today and to speak and debate on An Act to enact the Infrastructure for Jobs and Prosperity Act. I want to just read the very first section:

"Purpose

"(1) The purpose of this act is to establish mechanisms to encourage principled, evidence-based and strategic long-term infrastructure planning that supports job creation and training opportunities," and on and on.

So this law is now going to compel the province—this government—to establish evidence-based, strategic long-term infrastructure planning. That clearly implies that they have not been engaged in evidence-based, strategic long-term planning for infrastructure in the past. I think the evidence shows that that is indeed true. They have not been involved in long-term planning—not long-term

planning that is for the benefit of the people of Ontario; maybe long-term planning for the benefit of the people of the Liberal Party, but certainly not for the people of Ontario.

You would think that we've had responsible government here in what is now Ontario since the 1830s, and you would think that somewhere in those mere 200 years governments have actually been engaged in some strategic long-term infrastructure, that this is not just an epiphany that's happened today with the Ontario Liberals, that they have now found evidence-based strategic planning where all other governments in those mere 200 years did not understand or comprehend or implement long-term strategic planning.

I would say to you, Speaker, and to this House, that I think the 401 was a long-term strategic plan. I would think the Adam Beck generating station at Niagara Falls was probably a long-term strategic planning project. I could go on and on. This is not something new, but what is new and what is evident to me in my time in this House is the cavalier and casual regard for the law that this Liberal government does provide in its abiding of its own laws. What people will notice in Bill 6 is that there are no enforcement or compliance mechanisms. Nothing compels the government to actually do anything in Bill 6, other than it being the law. If they had a conscience, they would follow the law, but we know that most people would be suspicious if they do have a conscience.

Let me take you back, Speaker, and this House, to the deleted emails. Deleting the emails was unlawful. It was against the law. However, there was no consequence in the legislation for failure to abide by the law. So the Liberal government could and indeed did violate the law but not bear any consequence for that violation or that offence to the law, that offence to the people of this province, that offence to this Legislature—scot-free.

In this bill, there are no enforcement or compliance mechanisms. So if the Liberal government goes like this tomorrow and throws it in the trashcan and doesn't ever do anything about it, nothing will happen. It will be somewhat like what we found out during estimates committee last fall when we had the Ministry of Tourism and the Ministry of Energy there, and a host of ministers came in to have their ministries scrutinized for their appropriations for the year. Time and time and time again it was revealed to us, when we asked questions of these ministers and their senior staff, when we asked questions why the annual reports were not filed by their agencies—and, again, these were statutory obligations, included in a law just like this. The government and the ministers have an obligation to file annual reports. However, they weren't filed.

The minister seemed to be somewhat perplexed, even though it was his responsibility to ensure the agencies filed the annual reports. But there was no consequence. Some of those agencies were up to three and four years behind in filing their annual reports. But the minister didn't really—I shouldn't say “the minister”; the ministers, because we had a number of them in estimates com-

mittee. They just said, “They're late. They're late. We'd like to abide by the law, we'd like to fulfill our statutory obligations, but we just don't know how to do it,” or, “It's just not that important because there is no consequence for us being lazy or cavalier or disregarding the law.”

0920

We saw the same thing with the filing of expenses. We saw the same thing. Many, many, many people have an obligation to this House and to the public to file their expenses online. It was a law that was just passed in the 40th Parliament. In the 40th Parliament we passed a law that said that all these people have to file their expenses online. However, there was no consequence in that bill if they didn't file online and in a timely fashion.

So once again, we see this government repeating its past failures time and time and time again. They put a puppy in the window; they get some people to talk and to be distracted about this new-found crusade of the Liberal Party to act on evidence, to act on science-based and strategic planning, but guess what? “We don't really have to. It's just a law.”

What we've seen very clearly is that this Liberal government believes everybody must abide by the law except themselves. When they craft a law that is to be applied to the general public, they don't forget about enforcement and compliance. They put in a host of mechanisms to ensure compliance and to enforce it: warrantless entry into homes, warrantless entry into businesses, compelling of documentation. But in their own bill, they leave enforcement and compliance absent. Why is that? In the questions and comments maybe we'll get the member from St. Catharines to explain to this House why enforcement and compliance are not mandatory for government but only for the subjects.

I come from a line of advocacy for democratic institutions that say their foundation is that “neither prince nor pauper is above or beneath the law.” Clearly, this Liberal government believes their princes are above the law, but the paupers will feel the weight of their enforcement and compliance each and every time.

So once again, after 12 years in government, this government has now decided it's going to be thoughtful about infrastructure projects. Does anybody believe that? Does anybody actually believe that now, after 12 years of wasteful mismanagement, after 12 years of maladministration, of scandals, they have now found and turned a new leaf and they are going to be thoughtful and methodical in conducting business with regard for evidence and science? It'll be interesting. I'll be watching for the next three years. I'll be watching to see if they ever actually table this plan that they say is now mandatory in this law.

If I'm still here, I'm going to be waiting for that day when it says that this plan is going to be tabled. I'm going to stand up in this House and I'm going to ask the question: Why not? Because it won't be. The track record demonstrates time and time and time again that this Liberal government does not have any regard for the laws that are based for itself.

We'll see what the member from St. Catharines says on that day. He's not saying much today; he probably won't be saying much that day, either, just, "We didn't get around to it. It wasn't that important at the time. We thought it was important way back when, in 2015, but it's not important now"—because they're that good, that they don't have to apply to the law.

But I want to also say, going through the bill, that they lay out these broad, general frameworks of what projects will be subject to this long-term plan. And then they put forward a host of exemptions and a host of clauses which allow them to essentially exempt any and all projects from being involved in the long-term evidence-based strategic plan. And I want to hear during questions and comments: Why are they exempting so many projects from the obligation to be included in the long-term plan? I'm really looking forward for somebody on the government side to explain that to me. Explain to me why there are no consequences. Explain to me why there's no enforcement. Explain to me why there's no compliance. And explain to me why it is full of exemptions that you could drive a Liberal Party bus through. That's what is in this bill.

After we saw the events of the last week, with this Liberal government making deals with Ed Clark and other people outside of this House, beyond the view of this Legislature, I wonder what else we've got in store with this, what actually is going to be included in the evidence-based strategic plan that actually comes before this House. Or will it be done outside of the House—

Ms. Eleanor McMahon: Point of order, Mr. Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Burlington, a point of order.

Ms. Eleanor McMahon: I would ask that the honourable member stick to the topic at hand. I know that he is prone to talking about other things, as we all are from time to time, but I would ask that he do so in the interests of people watching the discussion.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): I've been listening carefully, and I think the member has been addressing the compliance and lack of enforcement around his discussion, so I don't think he's wandered too far yet, but if he does, I'll certainly let him know.

Mr. Randy Hillier: Solid interjections would be—if they maybe had read the bill themselves, they would know that what I'm talking about is the bill. There is no enforcement and compliance, and I was making the contrast of how we've seen this government operate when there are no enforcement or compliance mechanisms on them. We saw that, as I said, last week with their making deals with the Ed Clark panel outside of this House. There was no enforcement or compliance.

There's a tradition, there's a convention, in our parliamentary institution that these things ought to be discussed and first announced in the Legislature. But it is a convention. It is a tradition. It's a tradition that some people don't respect very much, but it's a tradition that others have a high regard for. And we've seen that this government does not have a high regard for traditions or con-

ventions. If there's an opportunity to skate, they'll skate, and this bill, Bill 6, allows them to skate ever more. It allows them to skate around traditions and conventions. It allows them to skate around obligations to the people of this province. It allows them to rag the puck and not be forthcoming in a complete fashion about what they're doing with infrastructure projects.

0930

I've put out a challenge to the Liberal benches if they can explain to me in the questions and comments why there are no enforcement and compliance mechanisms in this bill. That's number one. Why is there no enforcement? Just like the deleted email offence that they engaged in that had no consequence, why are they repeating the same mistake here? And why have they created so many exemptions? So many projects can be exempted from this bill.

Finally, over the last 12 years—as I stated at the outset, "The purpose of this act is to establish mechanisms to encourage"—I guess that's the one: encourage; not to make mandatory. It's just to encourage the Liberal government, give them a pat on the back: "Maybe if you just go this way a little bit to evidence-based and strategic long-term infrastructure planning."

I'd like to see the Liberal backbenchers encourage themselves to do better, encourage themselves to walk the walk and actually put some enforcement mechanisms into Bill 6 when it does come to committee. I challenge you: Put enforcement mechanisms in this bill during second reading at committee. I'd like to see it.

Just like the deleted emails, if some minister down the road doesn't table the reports like the convention asks, like the bill requires, what will be the consequence? Will the minister be forced to step down? Will the minister have to vacate his seat? What mechanisms will we require to ensure that the minister does his job? Because from what I've seen in estimates committee over these years, none of them—very, very few of them—take their responsibilities of the law very seriously, and have little regard for both the law and the traditions of representative democracy in this Legislature.

Thank you very much. I'll be listening keenly for the questions and comments.

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

Mr. Michael Mantha: It's always a privilege and a pleasure to stand up on behalf of the great people across my riding of Algoma-Manitoulin. I listened very closely to the comments from the member from Lanark-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington. My, that's a long one.

Mr. Randy Hillier: It is long.

Mr. Michael Mantha: I thought mine was long.

He talked quite a bit at length in regard to the lack of enforcement and the lack of consequences for a bill that, quite frankly, is obvious. Wouldn't you as a municipal leader, wouldn't you as a community member, wouldn't you as an Ontarian already think that your government is thinking and taking action about having long-term infrastructure investment? I would think that's a direct role of

government; that's what they were doing. But in the infinite wisdom of this Liberal government we now need a law to think about what we're supposed to do. It goes back to something that I've been using for a very long time when talking about this government: We're developing a plan to have a plan to implement a plan. It's a lot of planning but no action.

We see a lot of what is coming from this government as nice media front-line announcements—

Mr. Randy Hillier: Puppies in the window.

Mr. Michael Mantha: Puppies in the window—but really little substance behind them.

What I would like to see in this long-term plan is—I'm glad to see that there is going to be some consideration for what's referred to as a bullet train. What about northern Ontario? We've lost our ONTC. You've taken away our buses. We're losing our infrastructure. I hope that's part of your long-term plan.

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

Ms. Eleanor McMahon: I'm pleased to stand up in the House today. It's a great privilege, on behalf of the citizens of Burlington, to talk about long-term infrastructure.

I know I'm not the only member of this House who has had their mayor talk to them significantly about the need for long-term, predictable infrastructure funding and planning.

I was new to this place, but I was at OGRA/ROMA, and as the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry I had the great privilege of meeting with municipal leaders from across the province, as I did last year at AMO. It was interesting to hear the comments from the member from Lanark-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington—might I just say: That is a long name, isn't it? I heard mayors from his riding come in and talk about exactly that: the need for partnership with government, the need for infrastructure funding, the need for predictability and the need for a funding partner who is going to give them the certainty of a long-term plan for Ontario's infrastructure investments that are going to serve the needs of their communities.

While I come from a riding that's largely urban, our rural infrastructure needs are just as critical, and I'm happy to say that this legislation, Bill 6, will provide that kind of clarity, sustainability and greater predictability in infrastructure policy to keep our province economically competitive.

Internationally, companies are looking to invest in Ontario. In fact, we're the province with the largest amount of foreign direct investment. Why is that? Because people enjoy investing here. But they're going to do it even more and with more regularity if we have the kind of infrastructure and predictable funding for infrastructure that's going to attract their business to come here.

I'm enjoying the debate, I look forward to more of it, but I ask that all members of the House support this important bill because it's going to serve our municipalities and our communities well.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Chatham-Kent-Essex.

Mr. Rick Nicholls: Bill 6, An Act to enact the Infrastructure for Jobs and Prosperity Act, 2014. It sounds great for what it implies, but who wouldn't say that in the province of Ontario infrastructure is desperately needed? We on our side agree that it is needed. But my one question is this: Where will the money come from? Where will it come from? They talk about a three-year plan, a five-year plan, a 10-year plan and so on. It is our hope on this side that there will be a different government in three years' time.

You think about the scandals that this government has been involved in over the last three and a half years or so, or maybe a little bit longer: I talk about the gas plants—they're tired of hearing about it; we're tired of hearing about it—Ornge, eHealth scandals, OPP investigations, all of that. That costs money, and it was all on the backs of the taxpayers.

I support openness and transparency, I truly do, but my fear is that what this government says versus what they do are two very different things. It sounds wonderful, but my concern is: Will they really follow through?

We'll support this bill. It's our recommendation—we'll support the bill at second reading. But trust me, there has to be a number of amendments put into this which will, in fact, strengthen transparency and accountability.

I look at partisanship—and partisanship is alive and well inside this Legislature. My concern is simply this: I don't like the "us versus them" attitude, that everything they say is great and everything we say is bad or vice versa. I get that; I don't like it. I really believe, though, that there are good, caring, sincere people represented in here by all parties, but my concern is that this may be going against some of their values and principles, and therefore I have a serious concern.

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

Mr. Peter Tabuns: It's a pleasure to follow on the member from Lanark-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington. I must say that the member probably has some of the largest election signs in Ontario with that name.

0940

As my other colleagues have said, I can hear a whole lot of sizzle but there's a mammoth shortage of steak when it comes to this bill. I don't think it's an offensive bill; I don't think it's going to end the world if it's passed. But the government has the power to plan for infrastructure now. It provides the bucks, so it can say to any municipality or hospital or university, "These are the principles you've got to follow when you're doing infrastructure planning. When you're making an investment for the people of this province, it has to be infrastructure that makes sense, that's beautifully designed etc. It has to be climate-resilient. It can't offend our environmental principles." I don't think those are bad things to say, but they already have the power to do that.

Speaker, we do have a problem with this government relying on public-private partnerships to build infrastructure. The Auditor General said that we've wasted \$8 billion in roughly the last decade because we've overpaid private consortiums to eliminate risk. At what cost? Apparently eight billion wasted dollars—\$8 billion that could make a difference in this province. People would notice an \$8-billion project landing just about anywhere in Ontario.

Instead of dealing with where we're hemorrhaging money, what we've got is an announcement of sizzle. I understand this is a government that wants to look good. It brings forward a bill, and people ask, "What about infrastructure?" "We're bringing in a law. We're dealing with it." Speaker, you can't build a bridge with laws.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Lanark-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington has two minutes.

Mr. Randy Hillier: I just want to thank the members for their comments. However, I put out a challenge for what I see are deficiencies in this bill; they weren't addressed. They weren't even recognized by the Liberal member. Nobody has challenged my statements about this bill, about its shortcomings.

This bill is not about infrastructure projects. This bill is about imposing obligations on the government to develop plans and to report those plans to this institution. That's what this bill is about. Nothing in this bill says we're going to build more bridges or we're going to build more hockey rinks or hospitals. It doesn't say we're going to have more relationships or long-term planning or funding for municipalities. This bill is about putting safeguards in place—that's what the bill says—so that this assembly understands what the government's plan in the long term for infrastructure is. That's what the bill is: to report back to this House. However, there are no consequences for its failure to report back to this House. There are no consequences for failure to develop the plan at all.

I put that challenge out earlier; I'm still seeking an answer to my questions on this bill. Why is there no enforcement? Why is there no compliance? Why are there so many exemptions for projects to be outside of Bill 6?

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

Ms. Peggy Sattler: It is always an honour to rise in this House and speak on behalf of the people I represent in London West, who are counting on me to bring their concerns forward to inform the development of good legislation and good policy.

I'm especially pleased today to join the debate on Bill 6, the Infrastructure for Jobs and Prosperity Act. This is a bill that was introduced in this Legislature way back in July. It was actually one of the first bills that was brought forward by the new Liberal government following the election, and it has had a very short period of time for debate since it was introduced.

I'm glad to participate in this debate because, surprisingly, here at Queen's Park, MPPs don't get a lot of op-

portunities to talk about jobs and prosperity. There are actually very few bills that the Liberals have brought forward that contribute to getting our economy moving, that will create jobs for Ontarians and especially for young people.

There are, of course, bills like the Fighting Fraud and Reducing Automobile Insurance Rates Act and the Pooled Registered Pension Plans Act that will create jobs and prosperity for the insurance industry and for financial institutions, but there are very few pieces of legislation we've talked about here that address the needs of people who are underemployed, who are unable to find employment or who are looking to enter the labour market for the first time.

I do want to point out that my own private member's bill, the Protecting Interns and Creating a Learning Economy Act, would have done just that. Unlike the bill that we are debating today, my private member's bill did address the needs of vulnerable workers and it did include measures to boost productivity and grow the economy. I'm still waiting for that bill to be considered at committee and I hope it will be soon because I'm looking forward to debating it in the House at third reading and I know other members of my caucus are also looking forward to that.

The bill that we're debating here today, Bill 6, is similar to several other bills that have been introduced by the Liberals this Parliament. It is another fairly innocuous fluff bill. It has a grand title but relatively little content. It is more feel-good legislation, more spin than substance, and it includes no enforcement mechanisms that will ensure that it actually has an impact on some of the most pressing issues that are facing Ontarians today.

The primary purpose of Bill 6 is to encourage long-term infrastructure spending for the government of Ontario and the broader public sector by setting out specific principles that have to be followed and requiring the minister to prepare a 10-year infrastructure plan. Now, I said "principles that have to be followed"; I should have said "principles that have to be considered" because there is no requirement, actually, that these principles be adhered to.

Certainly, there's no question about the importance of long-term planning. Infrastructure spending is not a tap to be turned on and off depending on the political will of the day, nor is it a temporary solution to economic downturn to be discontinued once the economy improves. In fact, it's this kind of thinking, this kind of short-termism and ad hoc-ism, that has created the huge infrastructure deficit we see in this province today, which sits at around \$100 billion. Without a long-term infrastructure plan, what we have seen are many of our assets across this province in the communities we represent falling into serious disrepair and decay.

In London, in my community, the most recent State of Infrastructure Report indicates a current infrastructure funding gap of \$52 million, which could grow to \$466 million under current investment plans. Londoners are understandably concerned about the fact that 7% of our

city's assets are listed in very poor condition. They are still functioning, perhaps, but the level of service they provide is well below par.

At the same time, Londoners are excited and energized by the work that's under way on Shift London, which is an initiative to develop a rapid transit system for our community. An environmental assessment has started, and we will certainly be looking to the province to support this major infrastructure investment in London's growth and prosperity.

I should say that Londoners are intrigued. We recognize the potential of high-speed rail but we're not exactly holding our breath to see this initiative move forward, given the lack of planning that went into this hasty Liberal pre-election goodie announcement.

Of course, properly planned life cycle infrastructure is important, but, as has been said earlier this morning, the government doesn't need a new law in order to undertake this kind of long-term infrastructure planning. There's absolutely nothing stopping the government, if it wanted to, to proceed with the development of 10-year, 20-year, even 50-year infrastructure plans for this province. However, they did decide they need a law, so now I want to turn to specific aspects of the legislation that they have proposed.

0950

First, in looking at the definition of infrastructure, I couldn't help but notice one very significant exclusion. The infrastructure covered by Bill 6 includes highways, bridges, bicycle paths, drinking water systems, hospitals, courthouses and schools—basically any physical structure or facility through which a public service is provided to Ontarians.

What the bill doesn't cover is publicly owned electricity infrastructure, nor does it cover Hydro One or OPG. The cynic in me wonders if there was perhaps a deliberate omission by the Liberals when they wrote this legislation last summer. Maybe they knew all along what they were planning to do with the sell-off of Hydro One and maybe they knew how awkward it would be to have this bill debated in the Legislature while they were in the process of dismantling our public electricity system. How hypocritical this would make them appear, because there is no way that the privatization of Hydro One could be justified according to the principles that are set out in this bill.

There are nine planning principles that are described in Bill 6 that the government of Ontario as well as all broader-sector entities are required to consider when making infrastructure decisions.

First, take a long-term view and be mindful of demographic and economic trends.

Second, take budgets and fiscal plans into account.

Third, identify infrastructure priorities.

Fourth, ensure that core public services like health care and education continue to be provided.

Fifth, promote economic competitiveness, productivity, job creation and training opportunities.

Sixth, make innovative use of technologies.

Seventh, plans should be evidence-based and transparent. I will come back to that principle in a moment.

Eighth, be mindful of provincial and municipal plans or strategies; for example, those developed under the Planning Act or the Metrolinx Act.

Ninth, minimize impact on the environment, and design infrastructure to be resilient to climate change.

Speaker, I can tell you that, as a former school board trustee—and school boards will be covered by the act and be expected to take these principles into account—I would have loved to be able to make decisions about managing school assets that were based on principles and not just budget concerns.

Here in the NDP caucus, we have three former school board trustees. All of us were involved in very, very difficult decisions about school closures. These decisions were forced on school boards as the only possible option we could take, directly as a result of provincial underfunding. In these cases, the only principle that school boards were able to apply was principle number two—budgets and fiscal plans—because in all of these school board debates it was basically impossible to take the long-term view. The provincial funding model left school boards unable to maintain assets for long-term community benefit and for future generations of students.

If this bill goes to committee, I will be very interested in hearing from school boards how it will affect their infrastructure planning process and how it will inform their accommodation review process.

I want to speak in a little bit more detail about principle number seven, which is ensuring that infrastructure plans are evidence-based and transparent, which seems highly ironic in light of the Auditor General's report last December. The Auditor General revealed that the government spent an additional \$8 billion on public-private partnerships than they would have spent if the projects had been financed and managed by the public sector using traditional procurement methods and private construction.

These projects were undertaken as P3s because the government claimed that the P3 model allowed them to transfer large amounts of risk to the private sector. In fact, they claimed that the risks would have been five times greater if they had used public sector procurement compared to P3s. But as the Auditor General points out, they provided absolutely no evidence to support this claim. After confirming with external consultants like Deloitte, the auditor's report stated that there "is no empirical data supporting the key assumptions used by Infrastructure Ontario to assign costs to specific risks." Basically, the assumptions the government made about risk transfer, the costs that they calculated to compare the P3 model to traditional models, were fabricated. They were pulled out of thin air. They were cooking the books, so to speak, to provide a rationale for directing tens of billions of dollars of public spending—

Mr. Bob Delaney: Point of order, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Point of order: the member from Mississauga—Streetsville.

Mr. Bob Delaney: Speaker, standing order 23(h) prohibits the making of an allegation. You cannot say indirectly what you cannot say directly. “Cooking the books” is an accepted expression for “theft.” That’s over the line.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): I agree with that point of order. The member will withdraw that statement.

Ms. Peggy Sattler: Withdraw, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Thank you. Continue.

Ms. Peggy Sattler: In addition to the absence of empirical data, the other part of principle 7 about transparency in decision-making is also sorely lacking at Infrastructure Ontario. They have refused to make public the detailed cost calculations from any specific value-for-money assessments, and they have refused to make public even the generic risk assessment matrices and assumptions they use.

Certainly, this raises serious questions about the basis on which P3 decisions are being made. What we see at Infrastructure Ontario is not evidence-based infrastructure planning and investment. It is evidence-free planning and investment. It is not transparency, as would be required by principle number 7.

With \$130 billion to be spent on public infrastructure over the next decade, it would be a very good thing if principle number 7 prevented more money being wasted on overpriced P3s. But as we see the Liberals rushing to privatize whatever they can get their hands on, I suspect we are unlikely to see an end to their commitment to the P3 model, despite the evidence that shows that this is a bad deal for Ontario.

The second part of Bill 6 requires the minister to develop a long-term infrastructure plan, to be tabled in the Legislative Assembly and published on the government of Ontario website. The first plan is to be tabled in 2018, if the act passes this year, and subsequent plans every five years thereafter. But while the minister is expected to consider the planning principles set out in the bill, there is no requirement that the principles actually be incorporated into the plan.

The plan must include an inventory of government infrastructure assets, as well as a strategy on how to address anticipated infrastructure requirements through improvements or new assets over the next 10 years. Basically, the long-term plan must show how infrastructure investments and maintenance will be funded.

Again, when we look at the sell-off of Hydro One, one certainly sees the value of this approach, because instead of keeping plans secret from Ontarians, people would have known, when they went to the polls last June, that the Liberals planned to privatize Hydro One and drive up electricity bills, in order to fund GTA transit.

So New Democrats certainly see the value of this provision of the bill and support this direction.

Bill 6 also sets out the criteria to prioritize and evaluate new infrastructure projects, including alignment of the project with existing provincial or municipal plans;

capital and operating costs; and economic impacts, such as long-term return on investment and implications for tax-based growth.

Here I see a missed opportunity to incorporate criteria related to community benefits agreements, like that negotiated by Metrolinx for the Eglinton subway. This was, of course, after the Toronto Community Benefits Network fought hammer-and-nail to get Metrolinx to sign.

I was at the Good Jobs Summit last fall. I heard the Premier say that she supports community benefits agreements for major infrastructure projects and would have liked to see that commitment reflected in this bill.

Community benefits agreements are legally binding contracts that detail the specific benefits a community must receive from a given development project, such as equitable hiring practices, funding for training, neighbourhood improvements, good jobs, and support for social enterprise. They are gaining traction in the US and are starting in Ontario, so why not use this bill to incentivize municipalities to develop community benefits agreements as a criterion for major infrastructure projects?

The bill also requires apprentices to be hired for the construction or maintenance of infrastructure projects, but provides very little detail on what this will mean in practice. We understand that these details will be worked out in regulation; however, it will be critical to ensure that apprenticeship ratios are maintained. I look forward to hearing from the construction trades about this bill during the committee process and what they believe needs to be included in the regulations to ensure increased and more systematic use of apprentices on large infrastructure projects.

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Finally, perhaps the most worrisome provision of this bill is the regulatory authority it gives to the Minister of Infrastructure to establish regulations on virtually any infrastructure issue, including what infrastructure can be exempted from the definition of infrastructure. This kind of extremely broad latitude always raises concerns for Legislatures because passing such a bill is like writing a blank cheque: It’s an open-ended invitation for the minister to introduce regulations on almost any aspect of infrastructure planning and funding.

Before I close, I want to comment on two other gaps I see in this legislation.

First, it doesn’t require school boards and municipalities and other broader public sector entities to work together to make infrastructure planning decisions. What I experienced as a school board trustee was boards and municipalities often working in isolation instead of collaborating to maximize the impact of infrastructure investments in supporting the well-being of citizens and the needs of communities.

The other gap I see: Certainly, I think this bill is attempting to take a triple-bottom-line approach to infrastructure planning, but it is very weak as currently written. There’s only one vague reference to environmental sustainability as a principle that should be considered, and there is basically no reference to social benefits other

than the hiring of apprentices and the principle that core services like health and education should continue to be delivered. I also believe that this is an aspect of the bill that could definitely be strengthened, and I hope we will be hearing about that when and if the bill moves to committee. Triple-bottom-line approaches ensure not only environmental protection, not only an economic boost, but also that people who are disadvantaged and marginalized from the labour market receive some of the benefits of infrastructure projects.

In closing, New Democrats do have some reservations about this bill. We are concerned about the lack of impact that we suspect it will have on ensuring evidence-based infrastructure planning from this government. However, we believe there is enough merit in the bill to support it through the second reading process, and we are very much looking forward to hearing from stakeholders at the committee about how this bill can be strengthened.

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

Ms. Daiene Vernile: I'm very pleased to rise today to talk about Bill 6, to add my voice to this on the Infrastructure for Jobs and Prosperity Act.

I do want to say that, as a newer member, I do listen very closely to what's being said, the discussion here. I find it somewhat disconcerting when the discussion tends to stray and, sadly, you hear things that have nothing to do with what's at hand. It would seem that the opposition sometimes uses their time to try to air their grievances, but I want to speak specifically to this bill.

In my riding of Kitchener Centre, which is an urban riding, we care very much about infrastructure. We're very encouraged by our government's investment in the LRT. Construction is now under way, with \$300 million dedicated to that.

We see construction of a new Highway 7 between Kitchener and Guelph—that is going to be beginning later this year—and we have ambitious plans for all-day, two-way GO service that's going to be coming to our community in the next decade. That is a very solid investment to position ourselves in the future.

The underlying principle of this bill, as you know, is building modern infrastructure. That is part of our plan to continue growing the economy and to create jobs. We are investing \$130 billion in public infrastructure, and that is over the next 10 years. These investments are going to add 110,000 jobs annually. We just heard the member for London West say that there is no social benefit. Well, I would say that creating 110,000 jobs is a very good social benefit.

If Bill 6 is passed, it would require our government and future governments to regularly prepare long-term infrastructure plans. I keep hearing this from my mayor in Kitchener: "We need to have not just a shot of money, but it needs to be ongoing." This is what we are committed to.

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

Mr. Jack MacLaren: It's my pleasure to speak to this bill. As the member from Toronto–Danforth pointed out, it's unfortunate that we even need a bill like this because the government already has the power and the authority and I would say the responsibility to plan for infrastructure and investments.

However, the nature of government is such that all good planning and investment priorities are not done as they might be in the private sector, where profit would be the motivation, keeping costs under control would be a motivation and delivery of good services and good products would be the motivation. Sometimes other things happen, like, strangely, gas plants get closed—and that was not for profit; at least, maybe for political gain—and other activities like that that have interfered with investment planning as we want to do it now and in the future. We find ourselves now in a position where we can't afford subways because bad investment planning was done in the past, with gas plants and things of that nature.

Our member from Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington articulated very clearly that what's wrong with this bill—which is a well-intentioned bill, unfortunately a necessary bill, because we have a government that's not doing what it should be doing: There's no accountability for compliance, no penalties, and therefore the bill will not be complied with. There are no penalties, no reason to comply with the unfortunate need to even write this bill.

We will support the bill because unfortunately government needs this kind of thing. We will have to put amendments into it in committee for accountability and oversight.

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

Mr. Michael Mantha: I sat very attentively and listened to the words of the member for London West. She touched on the lack of enforcements and consequences within this. This is another announcement which is going to bring concern in regard to bringing proper transparency, oversight and accountability on it. She was right when she highlighted that this was one of the first bills this government brought forward in their new mandate on July 7, 2014, and quite frankly, this is probably only the second or third time that they've talked about it. Traditionally, they have to do it six, seven, eight times before it moves forward. So it's still a long way from actually becoming policy.

In her comments she talked about the P3s and the amount of money that the Auditor General was able to identify that was lost in years of P3 development and projects. We're talking about \$8 billion, Mr. Speaker: \$8 billion. That's with a "b"—\$8 billion. That's a heck of a lot of money. That's money that we could be using today. If we had that money, would this government actually be considering selling off and privatizing Hydro One? I think not, because that's money that would be going toward our services and our programs.

One last comment that I wanted to make on behalf of the member: She talked about something in regard to

baking, some kind of a recipe, something going on. And you know what? I look at this bill—this is like a birthday cake, but the only people who are going to benefit from this cook are Bay Street individuals and large construction consortiums, which are not only going to benefit from blowing out the candles, but they're going to be eating their cake as well.

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

Ms. Ann Hoggarth: Just before I start to talk about the bill, the member from London West said that she didn't have much chance to talk about jobs and prosperity. I would like to suggest that there were four weeks when there was nothing talked about but the riding of Sudbury and there was lots of time then to talk about jobs and prosperity.

But moving on: If passed and proclaimed, this proposed legislation would build on this work by ensuring that current and future governments regularly prepare long-term infrastructure plans and continue to improve how this province prioritizes and addresses infrastructure needs. We need that. We need to know that it's not going to be left for years and years and years and hope that it doesn't break down. We need to have plans so that it doesn't cost as much money as it does because it has broken down.

The number one thing that the city of Barrie wants is money for infrastructure. I know that the rural communities, when I've been at rural events, definitely need roads and bridges improved. This will help them, and they're very happy about it.

In Barrie on Friday, we were there and our government announced that we will be having our GO train be more of a priority, and over five years we will have it all day, every day—that is very exciting—both ways. We believe that we'll be able to entice people to come and visit Barrie, not just have people from Barrie commuting in to work in Toronto.

I urge everyone to pass this bill.

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

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I want to thank the member for Kitchener Centre, the member for Carleton–Mississippi Mills, the member for Algoma–Manitoulin and the member for Barrie for their comments on my remarks.

The member for Barrie talks about the importance of this legislation because it requires the government to regularly prepare and table infrastructure plans. We question why you need a law to enable the government to do that. Isn't that something the government could just go ahead and do? What this legislation includes is a list of feel-good, motherhood principles that it says the government should consider, but there is no requirement that these principles actually be reflected and incorporated into the long-term infrastructure plans that are brought forward. We have serious reservations about the lack of enforcement of this bill.

The member for Kitchener Centre talks about the social benefit of the jobs that are created, and that's one

of the issues about infrastructure investments. We know that jobs are created, but who is benefiting from those jobs? Are jobs being created for people who are long-term unemployed, who are disadvantaged, who have been marginalized from the labour market, who are living in poverty, who need opportunities to get a leg up in the labour market? There are no current provisions in this bill to ensure that there are some strong, targeted social benefits for individuals who have been shut out of Ontario's economy.

Speaker, as I said, we will be supporting this bill. We would love to see some evidence-based planning in infrastructure investments to prevent more P3s.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): It being close to 10:15, this House stands recessed until 10:30 this morning.

The House recessed from 1013 to 1030.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I'm pleased to rise to introduce a number of my constituents who are here today with the Association for Reformed Political Action. In the gallery are Bert and Mariah Budding, James Van Gorp, Peter Bos and Jonathan Zekveld. Thank you all for coming. I look forward to having a meeting with them this afternoon.

Hon. Mario Sergio: Visiting Queen's Park today, in the east members' gallery, we have, from the Ontario Retirement Communities Association, Mr. Paul Fogolin, Charlotte Burchett and Lesley Chalklin. Welcome to Queen's Park. I hope you enjoy it.

M^{me} France Gélinas: I am happy to present Furakh Mir. She is the founder and president of Meningitis Relief Canada, and she's here today to educate us about meningitis. I hope you welcome her to Queen's Park.

Mr. Jim Wilson: I ask all members to join me in welcoming Zack Goldford to the Legislature today. Zack is from the riding of Thornhill, the great riding of the honourable member from Thornhill, beside me. He is president of the Ontario PC Youth Association. Welcome back.

Ms. Cindy Forster: I have some guests here today from my riding. From the Wainfleet part of my riding, I have Ed, Jenn and Kim Vander Vegte, and Tyneesha Petter.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: I am pleased to introduce representatives from both the Canadian Transplant Association and Trillium Gift of Life, who are here with us today, and to recognize that April is Be a Donor Month. We have with us Sandra Holdsworth, Marc Quinet, Suzanne Camu, Mike Sullivan, Helen Farinha, Mae Herrera, Linda Bowers, Kelly Kleinschmidt, Niva Segatto, Bianca Segatto, Ronnie Gavsie and Adam Lemm. I'll be joining them at the kickoff event for the Canadian Transplant Games, which are coming to Toronto in 2016. We're kicking it off at Nathan Phillips Square today.

Mr. Jim McDonell: I had the privilege to meet this morning with the National Assembly of Vietnam Law Committee, led by Dang Dinh Luyen. They're in the Speaker's gallery.

Ms. Jennifer K. French: I'm pleased to welcome health care representatives from OPSEU that I had the pleasure of meeting with this morning: Jacqueline Partnoy, Kim Doucette, Julie Miller, Sandi Blancher and Richard Forget.

Also, I'm pleased to welcome Sara Labelle from Oshawa, who is the chair of the hospital professionals division, representing 24,000 hospital professions in 70 hospitals.

Ms. Indira Naidoo-Harris: I would also like to welcome members of the Meningitis Relief Canada group, who are here today to mark World Meningitis Day, which takes place on April 24. I also invite all members to attend the reception they are hosting today, between 4 and 6 p.m., in committee room 228. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Well, it's déjà vu all over again, Speaker. I would also like to recognize and welcome people here from Meningitis Relief Canada, and invite members to the reception here today.

M^{me} France Gélinas: I have a long list of guests who have made the trip to Queen's Park to launch the campaign to restore sustainable hospital funding. I will read their names into the record, because they don't come to Queen's Park very often, and I'd like us to recognize them: Marlene Riviere, Paul Taylor, Jane Loucks, Sean Platt, Lisa Miller, Bryan Mitchell, Betty Palmieri, Jacqueline Partnoy, Kelly Poole, Yves Shank—from my riding—Harjinder Sangha, Sylvain Thibault, Remi Thibeault, Una Wallace, Ed Zacharewski, Lynn Heins, Jonathan Hopkins, Richard Janson, Steph Kuntz, Kingsley Kwok, Sara Labelle—who was already introduced—Kelly Light, Lauren MacLaren, Linda Matteau, Steven McCaw, Patricia McNamara, Spencer McGonegal, Richard Meagher, Julie Miller, Brenda Allan, Jeff Arbus, Jan Archer, Adrian Balojin, Paul Beaumont, Sandi Blancher, Herve Cavanagh, Christine Charkavi, Mike Davison, Barb De Roche, Anette DiMatteo, Mike Donaldson and Kim Doucette.

Welcome to Queen's Park, and good luck with your campaign.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: Two quick things: One, I want to introduce, on behalf of the MPP for Oak Ridges–Markham, page captain Megan Chan's father, Johnny Chan, who is visiting us in the public gallery. I want to welcome him to Queen's Park.

Also, Speaker, I just want to give a hearty happy birthday to my chief of staff, Jackie Choquette, for celebrating her birthday on Earth Day. Happy birthday to her.

Hon. Dipika Damerla: I want to introduce Chris Yaccato, who is here from the Ontario Lung Association. He's here today to support Bill 45. More importantly, Speaker, he used to be your EA, so a special welcome to him.

Interjection: And my EA.

Hon. Dipika Damerla: And your EA.

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

Hon. James J. Bradley: Bob should be in the front row.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Let's get into question period before we start hearing that, okay? And then I'll tell you to stop.

We have with us in the Speaker's gallery today—and I'm sure we will provide a warm welcome to them—the delegation from the Law Committee of the National Assembly of Vietnam. Welcome.

WEARING OF CARNATIONS

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

Ms. Indira Naidoo-Harris: Mr. Speaker, I believe you will find that we have unanimous consent for members to wear carnations today in recognition of World Meningitis Day.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Halton is seeking unanimous consent to wear the carnations. Do we agree? Agreed.

They're in both lobbies. Thank you. Carnations are available in both lobbies.

ORAL QUESTIONS

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The leader of Her Majesty's loyal opposition.

Mr. Jim Wilson: Mr. Speaker, we ask that we stand down our lead questions, please.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The lead questions are to be stood down for the official opposition.

It is now time for the continuation.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Point of order.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): A point of order for—no, not a point of order. The member from Timmins—James Bay.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Mr. Speaker, as well, we'll be standing down our leads, awaiting the Premier.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): We do require consent to stand down, so I'm going to seek unanimous—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Yes, I have now heard that the lead is also requested to be stood down by the third party, so now our consent will be to stand down both leads.

Do we agree? Agreed.

I will now turn the rotation to—one moment, please.

I have been informed that the Deputy Premier will be responding to questions to the Premier today, so I will now request that the unanimous consent actually be rescinded.

Interjections: No.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Let me be clear—*Interjections.*

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Excuse me. Let me clear about that. I mentioned this once before. It is considered a courtesy to notify. That has been the tradition. It does not make a requirement to attend.

I'm going to repeat myself that the indication is that the Deputy Premier will be made available to answer questions that were intended for the Premier.

I'm offering the opportunity to rescind the unanimous consent to stand down, providing the Leader of the Opposition and the leader of the third party to put their lead questions.

I'm now going to turn to the leader of Her Majesty's loyal opposition for questions.

1040

ONTARIO BUDGET

Mr. Jim Wilson: My question is to the Acting Premier, and I'm sure it will be an act.

Over the last few weeks, Deputy Premier, the official opposition has laid out five commitments that we are asking to be included in tomorrow's budget:

Cancel the Ontario registered pension plan payroll tax because it will kill jobs.

Cancel the pay-to-pollute carbon tax that will increase the price of everything in the province.

Fix the home care system and improve home care services while tying community care access centre funding to outcomes.

Commit to reducing electricity prices in the province.

Finally, we ask that you provide a serious, credible and detailed plan to balance the budget.

Deputy Premier, will you commit to these five requests in tomorrow's budget?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Speaker, really, the answer is a resounding no. We are absolutely committed to moving forward on retirement security for Ontarians, and I, for the life of me, don't understand why you would not support enhanced retirement security for seniors.

We are moving forward with a balanced plan. I know we're all looking forward to seeing the budget tomorrow, but we have a plan to get back to balance and, at the same time, invest in those much-needed infrastructure projects that will lift Ontario up.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Jim Wilson: Deputy Premier, your own internal finance ministry documents have told you that the Ontario registered pension plan will cost the province at least 18,000 jobs. The pay-to-pollute carbon tax will spike the price of gas and increase the price of everything. Patients and their families are finding it extremely difficult accessing home care through the CCACs. Electricity prices are set to rise 15% on May 1, in addition to the 42% increase over five years that we already know about.

Let's be serious: No one believes you have a plan to balance the books by 2017-18. Rising interest payments on that debt means less money for important front-line

services like health care and education. The auditor, in her recent report, said exactly that.

Deputy Premier, will you take our advice and stop gouging Ontarians who can't afford to pay any more than they already are?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I do respect the clarity of the party opposite, but we reject the approach that you are taking. We had an election less than a year ago. This different way of moving forward was debated. The people chose to go with the Liberal Party because we had a plan to move forward, investing in much-needed infrastructure, investing in the things that people need in our education system, in our health care system—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Please finish.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Speaker, our plan is thoughtful, it is pragmatic and we are moving forward on implementing that plan.

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

Mr. Jim Wilson: To the Deputy Premier: Ontarians know your budget will result in skyrocketing electricity prices and a tax on everything. Cuts to nursing and home care will continue. Some 249 nurses have been fired since last year's election, when the Premier promised health care services would be protected. Schools are closing and teachers are being fired despite the Premier's election promise that teachers wouldn't lose their jobs. Private sector jobs are being lost across most sectors of the province and of the economy because it has become too expensive to do business in Ontario, and the cost—

Hon. Brad Duguid: That's totally false. There is nothing to statistically support that whatsoever.

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

Interjections.

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

While he was in the middle of his argument, I asked the member to come to order. In case he didn't hear it, the Minister of Economic Development, Employment and Infrastructure will come to order.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): And whoever decides to want to be my armchair quarterback will also be warned.

Carry on.

Mr. Jim Wilson: Clearly, private sector jobs are being lost in many sectors of the economy. You can't deny that. You're living in wonderland if you deny—

Hon. Brad Duguid: Clearly, that's false.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The Minister of Economic Development will come to order, and he's inches away from a warning.

Carry on.

Mr. Jim Wilson: Deputy Premier, why won't you commit to our budget ask that will give hard-working Ontarians financial relief, better home care and a credible plan to keep and create jobs in this province?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Speaker, we are all looking forward, as I said, to tomorrow's budget. What we will see is a plan to continue to promote the expansion of our economy in Ontario.

The member opposite, the member who ran on the platform of firing 100,000 people, is now concerned about job losses. Where was that concern in the last election campaign?

The member knows full well, as a former Minister of Health—he's watching carefully, I'm sure—that we have 24,000 more nurses working in Ontario than we did when we took office.

Interjections.

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

Hon. Deborah Matthews: You can point to individual situations—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I will repeat myself a second time for the member from Dufferin–Caledon and the member from Hamilton East–Stoney Creek, and for the member from Simcoe North: Come to order.

Finish, please.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: To the heckling: 24,000 more nurses—

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: Not working.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Working. Working. Employed—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Simcoe North: second time.

Carry on.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Let me repeat: 24,000 more nurses are working in Ontario now than when you left office. I know the member opposite doesn't actually believe that number. We would be happy to give you those numbers. It is the truth, Speaker. They don't like it. They want us to cut nurses. We are not going to do that.

ONTARIO BUDGET

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Good morning, Speaker. My question is for the Deputy Premier. You grew our deficit from \$9.2 billion to \$10.5 billion, and now to \$10.9 billion this year. You're headed the wrong way. You're getting farther away from balancing, not closer.

You turned our once-proud province into an economic wreck. We have the highest energy costs in North America. We have the highest payroll taxes in Canada.

Since you turned us into a have-not province, you've received \$14 billion in equalization payments from the federal government, and you still can't balance the budget. You're failing our youth, hurting our seniors and putting families in an ever-deepening hole. Why should anyone believe you can balance a budget when you can't even reduce your own deficit?

Interjections.

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

Deputy Premier.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: We have a very clear plan to balance the budget by 2017-18, and tomorrow's budget will demonstrate how we are taking those next steps.

I can tell you that in 2014-15, our government is once again beating our deficit target, Speaker. We have done that year after year. The result is \$25 billion less in debt than originally projected.

We have a responsible plan. We have a balanced plan. We have a plan that invests in our people and invests in our infrastructure as we take responsible decisions to get best value for the money that we spend in this province.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: To the deputy: Every expert has spoken out about the sorry state of Ontario's finances—all under your watch.

Our latest release of Focus on Finance puts Ontario under a microscope, and no one is happy with what it reveals. The Auditor General said, "Ontario's debt continues to grow faster than the province's economy." The result is what she calls a "crowding out of other spending." We now have less money for the things our citizens expect from the province. We're starting to see front-line cuts in health care and education, just as the Auditor General warned.

Later today, our interim leader, Jim Wilson, will present our opposition day motion with five budget asks designed to help Ontario's families. Will you agree to change your downward path and support our motion?

Interjections.

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

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: Just say yes.

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

Deputy Premier.

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Hon. Deborah Matthews: Speaker, the opposition party continues to tear Ontario down, calling us an economic wreck. That is simply not accurate.

Our plan, in stark contrast, is all about building Ontario up. We are committed to continuing to build that dynamic, innovative, competitive business environment. We will continue to invest in our people, particularly young entrepreneurs and young people who are working on that transition from school to work.

We absolutely are committed to building up our infrastructure. For too long, the appropriate investments have not been made in our infrastructure. We're addressing that.

And we are going to continue to ensure that the hard-working people of Ontario have the retirement security that they deserve. I would suggest that you look at our plan and join us in this fight.

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

Mr. Victor Fedeli: To the deputy: Earlier this week, we asked that you present a serious, credible and detailed

plan to balance the budget. Instead, we continue to see front-line cuts. Everyone in this Legislature has examples, so let me give you some from my hometown of North Bay: 94 full-time and 34 part-time front-line health care workers, including nurses, have been fired in North Bay; more than 54 people at Nipissing University, including 22 professors, have been fired in North Bay; and 43 workers from Ontario Northland have been fired in North Bay. Your wasteful and scandalous mismanagement of our budget is reducing services and putting the most vulnerable at risk.

When will you present a serious, credible and detailed plan to balance the budget?

Interjections.

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

Mr. John Yakabuski: The federal government has balanced theirs.

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

Deputy Premier.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: To the Minister of Health.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: Mr. Speaker, I'm glad that the member opposite has referred to health care in North Bay, because I know he already knows this information that I want to share with the rest of the Legislature. On Monday, it was announced that three health organizations would receive funding for this fiscal year. In fact, this announcement was made by the member opposite. Quoting the North Bay Nugget, "The funds, recently announced by Nipissing MPP Vic Fedeli, will go toward mental health and replacement reserve costs associated with supportive housing services in Nipissing."

In fact, the member opposite, in a release, extended—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Answer.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: On Monday, he extended his "sincere appreciation on behalf of Nipissing residents to our local health care professionals for their"—

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

PRIVATIZATION OF PUBLIC ASSETS

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is for the Deputy Premier. Last year, the Premier stood in this House and she said she would "look at the assets" to "optimize the value of those assets."

The Premier has talked about maximization, unlocking value and rationalizing assets. The Premier has used just about every word except "sell" and "privatize" when it comes to Hydro One.

If the Liberals are so proud of what they're doing, so proud of selling and privatizing Hydro One, why can't they just say the words? Will this Deputy Premier tell Ontario today how proud the Liberals are to do what Mike Harris wouldn't dare do: sell and privatize Hydro One?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Speaker, this government is committed to building the infrastructure that this province absolutely needs. Governments of the past have not invested appropriately in infrastructure, which leaves us with a huge infrastructure deficit. What we are doing is, we are unlocking the value of some of our assets so that we can build that very important transit infrastructure.

We were clear about this. This was discussed in the budget prior to the last election. It was included in our election platform. Whether the leader of the third party knows it or not, she ran on it too, because she took all of our fiscal assumptions and embedded them in her platform.

We're moving forward. We are expanding the sale of beer, and we're broadening the ownership of Hydro One. At the same time, we are protecting ratepayers. We are creating lasting public benefit to the people of this province, and the status quo just simply doesn't—

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

Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Speaker, the Liberals are selling Hydro One, and now they say this is what they ran on. The words "sell Hydro One" aren't in their platform; neither is "privatize." They were not even whispered on the campaign trail.

The Premier says she's being straightforward with Ontarians. Oh, please. Ontarians were never told of her plan to sell Hydro One, Ontarians were never asked what they think of her plan to sell Hydro One and they certainly have never signed off on the Liberal plan, the wrong-headed plan the Liberals have, to sell Hydro One.

Will the Liberals just come out and admit it—just admit it—to the people of Ontario?

Interjections.

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

Deputy Premier?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: The party opposite has been vocal in their criticism, but they have offered no constructive plans on how to pay for infrastructure that we need in this province. This is not about ideology. This is about finding a practical solution to a problem.

Some members of the NDP, I know, do support this. Former NDP cabinet minister Frances Lankin was on the panel. She understands that we need to make these investments. The Power Workers' Union is supportive of our plan. They understand that need. LIUNA, the building trades, mayors and councillors across this province are supportive of this plan. It is unfortunate that the leader of the third party can't see beyond—

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

Final supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Once the Liberals sell off Hydro One, it is gone. There is no going back. As Ontarians watch rates go up to feed Bay Street profits, they will do so knowing that they will never, ever be able to regain control of their hydro system. It is wrong for our

generation, it is wrong for our kids' generation and it is wrong for our grandkids' generation.

The Premier is spending more time right now in this province consulting about where to sell a 12-pack of Bud than they are about privatizing strategic assets like Hydro One. Selling Hydro One is forever. The plan is the wrong plan for Ontario.

Will the Liberals do the right thing and pull the plug on this plan?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: As a result of that decision to broaden the ownership of Hydro One while protecting the public interest, it is allowing us to invest in infrastructure. The Moving Ontario Forward fund is now \$31.5 billion over 10 years because we've been able to unlock those assets. Some \$16 billion of that will be spent in the GTHA and \$15 billion outside the GTHA. It will go for regional express rail, Hamilton RT, Huronario LRT—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Someone is close to a warning.

Carry on, please.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: It's allowing us to fund the Connecting Links program, Highway 7 between Kitchener and Guelph. I ask the member opposite: What do you want to cut? What don't you want to build?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. New question: leader of the third party.

PRIVATIZATION OF PUBLIC ASSETS

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My next question is also for the Deputy Premier. The Premier's plan is wrong for Ontarians. It is going to mean that families who are already stretched are going to be stretched even further. People will be paying more so that a small handful of shareholders can make more money. Every dollar that goes into their pockets is a dollar that doesn't go into hospitals, schools or transit. This will actually cut stable income that goes into projects like building transit, keeping schools open or building hospitals.

Do the Liberals really think Ontarians should keep paying more and more and more and getting less and less and less?

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Hon. Deborah Matthews: Well, we just fundamentally disagree with the approach of the third party. We believe in investing in our infrastructure. We believe in investing in those projects that actually improve the quality of life for the people of this province. I think that if she went and spoke to the people in Hamilton, they would say that they don't want to spend time caught in gridlock.

We must make these investments. We want a growing, thriving economy because it's the right thing to do for people. So we are going to move forward. We are moving forward, building the infrastructure that is needed, because the people of this province are demanding that.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Today, Hydro One puts hundreds of millions of dollars into the things that people rely on, like hospitals, schools and infrastructure. But the Liberals are planning to sell Hydro One to Bay Street, and it's going to make a handful of well-connected Bay Street investors even wealthier while Ontarians have to stretch every dollar further just to make ends meet.

Privatizing Hydro One is wrong for Ontarians and will actually cut stable, long-term revenue. Why do the Liberals think this is okay?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Well, the member knows that part of the work of the panel was to actually look at how you offset the revenue loss. They did that. That's why we're making changes in beer distribution, for example. But we're not the only ones who think this is a great idea. Don MacKinnon the president of the Power Workers' Union, says, "The Power Workers' Union welcomes and supports the decision by government to keep Hydro One whole in an IPO process that would, in partnership with government, broaden the ownership structure in Hydro One. This will position the company to grow and provide further high-skill quality jobs for Ontarians."

Joe Mancinelli, the vice-president at LIUNA International, says, "The Wynne government is to be commended for today's announcement implementing sweeping changes in our province which will greatly benefit all Ontarians. The \$4 billion these changes will introduce for investment in infrastructure projects"—

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

Final supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The Premier wants to continue to protect private profits through sweetheart P3 deals. That's going to waste billions and hurt families. She's opening up brand new HST loopholes. That's going to waste billions and hurt families. She's planning to sell Hydro One to Bay Street. It means a cut to provincial revenues and it's going to hurt families.

Nobody cares what the Premier calls this, whether she calls it ideological, non-ideological, the activist centre; I call it a sellout. I call it taking hard-earned dollars from middle-class families and struggling Ontarians and dumping those dollars into the pockets of Bay Street boardrooms and shareholders. That's what this is. It doesn't matter what she calls it, because those are the facts. The money is coming out of the pockets of everyday families and going into the pockets of Bay Street shareholders. That plan is wrong for Ontario, and Ontarians deserve better.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Let's hear what Joe Mancinelli had to say. He said, "The \$4 billion these changes will introduce for investment in infrastructure projects, the largest infrastructure investment in Ontario's history, is welcome news to LIUNA and our members. Job creation is one of the key components of this initiative, and we welcome the much-needed infrastructure and the thousands of jobs that will be created for our members for years to come."

There are many others who are supporting this decision. We've heard the NDP do not support these investments. I think that's a shame, because the people of this province need those investments.

HYDRO RATES

Mr. John Yakabuski: My question is for the Minister of Energy. I'll go directly to him because I know it's going to get dumped over there anyway.

Minister, the speed at which the price of electricity continues to escalate in Ontario under your government is even quicker than your attempt to expedite the sale of Hydro One. Your frantic desire to sell off this public asset clearly suggests and indicates that your government is desperate for money. Perhaps if you weren't recklessly wasting billions of dollars on failed gas plants, expensive wind energy experiments and defective smart meters, energy rates would be much more affordable and you wouldn't have to resort to the sale of Hydro One.

Minister, why are you continuing to do nothing to lower unaffordable energy rates for ratepayers and businesses here in the province of Ontario?

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: I'm pleased that the member mentioned electricity rates for businesses across the province. One word that the opposition never mentions is "conservation." Let me say a few words about conservation.

Home Depot has completed 191 conservation projects province-wide. These have reduced energy consumption by more than 29 million kilowatt hours since 2012, enough electricity to power more than 3,000 typical Ontario homes per year.

Tim Hortons, Mr. Speaker—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The Leader of the Opposition will come to order, please.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): And Thornhill.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Did I miss? Never mind. Thank you.

Finish, please.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: Mr. Speaker, 245 Tim Hortons restaurants underwent renovations that included energy-saving measures like switching to LED lighting and installing white roofs. Through its combined conservation efforts last year, Tim Hortons would save around four million kilowatt hours of electricity province-wide—

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

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. John Yakabuski: Well, Minister, when the factory closes, their consumption goes down to zero. I guess that's your ultimate conservation plan.

Minister, you have got to stop playing games with vulnerable people in Ontario, with your energy prices. One day you announce a minuscule rebate for low-income

ratepayers. However, within days, you increase their bills and the bills of everyone else across this province by an unacceptable, unsustainable 15%.

This sleight-of-hand shell game of yours has got to stop. People cannot take it anymore. They've had enough of your failed energy experiments here in the province of Ontario. Your negligence has resulted in unaffordable electricity rates, making it more and more difficult for small business, seniors and families to survive in this great province of Ontario.

Minister, as one of our PC caucus asked, will you restore competitive electricity rates in Ontario, to make them affordable for families, seniors and small businesses?

Interjections.

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

Minister?

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: Mr. Speaker, the member is aware of the fact that the MDF paperboard plant in Pembroke, his riding, is reopening after being accepted into the IEI Program—which is a program that supports businesses—creating 140 new jobs for the area, in his riding.

Atlantic Packaging, from Whitby, is expanding their paper mill and creating 80 jobs with the help of the new IEI Program. Detour Gold says that the program will save them \$20 million in one year while they expand what will be one of the largest gold mines in Canada.

Our rates are competitive. On the residential side, there are three provinces that have higher rates than we do. There are two, Manitoba and Quebec, that are considerably lower because of legacy hydro programs. When we compare them to cities like Detroit, Boston and New York, we're considerably below them. In North America, we are competitive from an industrial business point of view, and competitive from a residential—

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

Stop the clock, please.

Interjections.

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

New question.

EDUCATION FUNDING

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: My question is to the Minister of Education. Minister, contrary to Liberal spin, Ontarians know that your government sets the priorities for education in this province.

This Liberal government has made it clear that it prioritizes cutting special education and forced closures of neighbourhood schools. Now we're learning that they plan on flip-flopping on their commitment to keep class sizes manageable.

Speaker, why is this government refusing to take responsibility for short-sighted cuts to education, which have resulted in labour unrest and the closure of community schools?

Hon. Liz Sandals: I'm really pleased to share with this Legislature that, in fact, education funding is stable. It was \$22.5 billion last year; it's \$22.5 billion this year—and the number of students has gone down, which means the per-pupil amount has gone up.

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But let me tell you about some of the really exciting things that we're doing. We have invested \$12.9 billion in school infrastructure, including nearly 725 new schools and more than 700 additions and renovations. We've worked to give our students programs like specialist high-skills majors, co-op education and dual credits. We announced just last week that the graduation rate has now gone up to 84%. We are actually doubling the amount of money this year spent on school renovation—

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

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: I'd like to point out to the Minister of Education: You say funding is stable. Special education needs have gone up, hydro rates have gone up, and transportation costs have gone up; therefore, the funding has gone down.

Speaker, back to the Minister of Education: Ontario families are growing tired of a minister who finds her portfolio perplexing. With teachers in Durham on strike, Rainbow District in northern Ontario to join next week, and now Peel preparing to strike in May, this government must take responsibility for throwing our school system into chaos.

Why are the minister and her government skirting responsibility for the mess her government's cuts to education have made in our school system?

Hon. Liz Sandals: The member opposite might be interested to know that the lines to pay for utilities have gone up.

However, let's talk about Durham, because the member opposite brought up Durham. Let me tell you about Durham. The Durham public board is going to receive \$729 million in funding for this school year. That's \$2 million more than last year. It's \$289 million more than in 2003. In fact, it has gone up 65% since 2002-03. Let me tell you about the per pupil funding. It's up almost \$4,000 in Durham, a 57.4% increase for every single student in Durham. It's now \$10,661—

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

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

New question.

CLIMATE CHANGE

Ms. Ann Hoggarth: My question is to the Minister of the Environment and Climate—

Interjections.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Have you been ejected?

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Well, you may be. Carry on.

Ms. Ann Hoggarth: My question is to the Minister of the Environment and Climate Change. The first Earth Day was held on April 22, 1970. Since then, Earth Day has grown into an international event, with 192 countries holding Earth Day events across the globe. Children in classrooms and daycares in Barrie and around the world will be learning about why there is an Earth Day and how they can help save our planet on a daily basis. Earth Day Canada is celebrating their 25th anniversary this year with the goal to engage people across the country in a national effort to reduce their carbon footprint.

I'm sure constituents of my riding of Barrie will be pleased to know that, thanks to the leadership of this government, Ontario met—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Question.

Ms. Ann Hoggarth: Speaker, could you please ask the minister to answer: What are some simple things Ontarians can do to reduce their carbon footprint?

Hon. Glen R. Murray: I want to thank the member from Barrie, who is a great educator and understands the importance of the next generation.

I was out with about 100 children this morning. There are certain moments in your life you'll never forget, and this was one of them. I realized, as I was looking at those children, that they are the first generation that will never know normal climate. We are the last generation that will ever know normal climate. What they were saying to me and what they wanted to say to members of the Legislature is that they ride their bikes; that they're living on a planet that's fast heading for four degrees Celsius, and they want us to stop that. They realize that we're the last generation that can do that.

This is the 25th Earth Day anniversary in Canada; we maybe have 25 more Earth Days to get this right. I'm very proud to be part of a government that understands that that's the first priority of Canadians.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Ann Hoggarth: Thank you, Minister. While it's important that individuals reflect on their carbon footprint and take some simple measures to reduce their impact on the environment, it's equally important that our government continue to show leadership in fighting climate change. I know that my constituents are proud of the fact that Ontario was the first jurisdiction in North America to close coal-fired power plants.

The 2013 Air Quality in Ontario report was released a week ago, on the anniversary of the last coal plant closure in Ontario. The report confirms that our air quality has improved significantly over the last 10 years, and for the first time in 20 years, no—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Please finish. Wrap up.

Ms. Ann Hoggarth: Minister, could you inform us about what further action this government is taking to fight climate change and reduce greenhouse gas pollution in our atmosphere?

Hon. Glen R. Murray: Mr. Speaker—
Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Nepean–Carleton will come to order. The member from Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington is warned.

Carry on.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Hamilton East–Stoney Creek: I can do without the whistling.

Mr. Paul Miller: I didn't do it. I didn't whistle.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I'm sorry. Whoever it was, I'll do without it. I apologize.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Eglinton–Lawrence. I have a feeling that you have not got the message that I would like a question period as best we can.

Minister?

Hon. Glen R. Murray: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for that.

We are doing everything from my friend the Minister of Transportation working to electrify the entire GO system—in economic and development we're global leaders in green technology, low-carbon technology. These are very important things.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Did you drive together with the Premier, Steven?

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

Hon. Glen R. Murray: It was interesting because my friend from Timmins–James Bay made the reference to dinosaurs, which I thought were extinct until I heard some of the positions of the party opposite. The difference between us and dinosaurs—

Interjections.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Speaker, I demand retraction. To refer to honourable members as dinosaurs is unacceptable.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Renfrew—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Before I make my comment that I was going to make, the member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke is warned.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Glengarry–Prescott–Russell is warned.

I am not impressed with any kind of response that impugns anyone in this place. It's getting a little ridiculous, so let's just calm down, everyone.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Will he withdraw that?

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I wouldn't want to add anything more to where you are right now.

And I would advise anyone that if they do say something that is inflammatory, that they would be kind enough to withdraw.

Carry on.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I sometimes don't think we fully understand how serious this was. Yesterday, the federal government became the first government to completely divest entirely from any dollars or expenditures in climate change, leaving the entire fight on climate change in this country to municipalities and provinces. So here we are in the shadow of the worst environmental budget in Canadian history, celebrating Earth Day.

HOME CARE

Mr. Bill Walker: My question is to the Deputy Premier. Let me remind you that there are approximately 350,000 people over the age of 65 who currently receive home care services in Ontario. They have told us over and over again that their home care system is broken; it is inadequate and inconsistent at best. With our aging population and your fiscal mismanagement, nobody believes the system will be equipped to handle future need. Quality and accessibility will continue to deteriorate. Your expert, Gail Donner, has said, "Everyone ... is frustrated with a system that fails to meet the needs of clients and families.... no one thinks the status quo is an option."

Deputy Premier, how much longer do seniors and their families have to wait for you to make the necessary changes to their home care system?

1120

Hon. Deborah Matthews: To the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: I appreciate the question. I know the member opposite knows that we appointed Gail Donner and a team of experts, in fact, to look at home and community care. We did that last year. They presented their report to me at the end of January. That report is being made public.

I've also indicated that I've endorsed the recommendations in that report. We agree that more needs to be done for home and community care. That's the express purpose of us convening that table in the first place.

We are taking the recommendations very seriously. We are continuing to invest in home and community care. Of course, this year \$270 million more invested in home and community care—that's a 5% increase. But we are looking at the table's—the expert panel's—recommendations very seriously, and we will be making changes based on those recommendations.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Bill Walker: Back to the Deputy Premier. The people of Ontario are frustrated. This frustration is being felt by the senior citizen who can't get a personal support worker following a hip replacement. This frustration is felt by a daughter trying to get physiotherapy for her father who recently suffered a stroke. This frustration is being felt by the thousands of people who cannot get the home care services they need.

We know the two biggest issues within our system are excessive bureaucracy and a lack of accountability for system outcomes, yet you continue to ignore the obvious.

Deputy Premier, will you make the functional changes to our system that we need in order to improve patient care? Will you tie funding to the community care access centres so we can have improved outcomes and patient results? Will you do that, Deputy Premier?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: As I said, we're making substantial investments in our home and community care sector—more than \$4 billion invested in that sector annually, increasing that this year, next year and the year after by 5%, as we continue to provide that high-quality care, accessible and timely care, in the places where people want it the most: in their homes or in their communities. We are making changes.

I would hope, now that we have Gail Donner's report guiding the way forward with her specific recommendations of her and of the team—I would like to ask the member opposite if we can count on his support as we implement those changes that are required to meet the recommendations and the aspirations that are outlined in that report.

HEALTH CARE FUNDING

M^{me} France Gélinas: Ma question est également pour le ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée. OPSEU hospital workers are at Queen's Park today in the gallery. They came to tell us, as first-hand witnesses, that the Liberal government's cuts to health care are having a devastating impact on quality of care.

I'll give you some examples. At Lakeridge Health centre, they had to let 20% of their genetic technologists go. They are also laying off their senior technologists in flow cytometry. This is the charge tech being laid off. These positions have a direct impact on the patients at the Durham regional cancer centre.

In Cornwall, it is 11% of their sonographers that have been cut.

Hospitals are forced to reduce or cut these services because of your government cuts. My question is simple: How many more cuts should we expect—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Minister of Children and Youth Services, come to order, a second time.

M^{me} France Gélinas: —Ontario's hospitals will see in tomorrow's budget?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: I'll say this as generously as I can, but, despite what the member opposite has just said, the facts are somewhat different. We are, and have been and will be, increasing our funding to health care, as we have done over the past decade, and we will continue to do so moving forward.

The member opposite knows that we invest more than \$50 billion in our health care system annually, and that investment—a significant portion of that investment goes into the hospital environment as well. That investment in our hospitals—our front-line health care workers and the environment that people depend on when they do get ill and require service—has increased by more than 50% in the last decade.

It is factually incorrect, I would suggest to the member opposite. To state that we are somehow cutting health care—health care has for the past decade increased in funding each year, and it will continue to do so.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

M^{me} France Gélinas: It is bad enough that we're seeing health care cuts throughout our province, but when the minister refuses to acknowledge that those cuts are taking place, it's making things worse, not better.

This is year three of a hospital-based budget freeze. All of them are struggling to balance their budgets, and they have no choice but to cut programs, services and positions. The bottom line looks like this: 22 positions cut in Cambridge; in London, 97 positions cut; Sarnia, 39 positions cut; Timmins, 40 positions cut; Sudbury, 42 positions cut; CHEO, 50 positions cut; and at the brand new hospital in North Bay, 94 full-time and 34 part-time positions cut. We all know who pays the price for those cuts: It's the patients who need health care services.

Speaker, with the budget coming tomorrow, will Ontarians continue to see this right-wing austerity health care agenda? How many more cuts to health care can we expect to see in tomorrow's budget?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: The member opposite, of course, has her list and I have mine, which is somewhat different.

The Ottawa Hospital has 49 RN active postings right now where they're looking for 49 registered nurses to work at that hospital; the Royal Ottawa health centre, 15 RNs and one RPN active postings today; the Orillia Soldiers' Memorial Hospital is looking for 10 RNs; London Health Sciences Centre is looking for 10 RNs and three nurse practitioners; Lakeridge Health centre, where I had the privilege of announcing a new pharmacy, is looking for seven RNs; Hamilton Health Sciences centre is looking for 16 RNs; Grand River, seven RNs; Bluewater Health system, five RPNs; Almonte General Hospital, two RNs and four RPNs. This is the situation around the province.

Of course, programs change, and there are changes that are made at that local level, as they should be, but we are adding health care personnel—

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

New question.

FLOODING

Mr. Chris Ballard: My question is for the Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry. Rising temperatures and April showers bring spring flowers, but rising temperatures and heavy rains also bring spring flooding.

The Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry, along with conservation authorities like the Lake Simcoe Region Conservation Authority in my riding of Newmarket–Aurora, monitors surface water levels, weather forecasts, water conditions and locations across our watershed. These measurements, weather forecasts and radar information on temperature and rainfall predictions, along with historical data, are all compiled to develop a flood forecast.

Through you, Mr. Speaker, to the Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry: Can the minister please explain to the House what his ministry is doing to ensure that communities in Ontario are prepared to respond to potential flooding emergencies?

Hon. Bill Mauro: I want to thank the member for the question. It's topical and timely.

Our ministry works with communities, conservation authorities and Environment Canada to forecast where and when flooding is likely to occur. The ministry has an information website to inform people in Ontario about potential flooding, provide real-time information about weather and flooding risks, and tips on what to do in the event of flooding.

This piece is very important: Conservation authorities, for people to know on a local level, are responsible for providing local flood messaging to municipalities. In areas where there is not a conservation authority, district offices will provide that information to First Nations communities and to the local municipalities where a conservation authority does not exist.

Our Surface Water Monitoring Centre performs daily assessment for flood hazard potential. The ministry does a variety of things in that regard, and monitors watershed conditions 24 hours a day. This is a significant piece, and I want to make sure that communities, conservation authorities and First Nations are aware of what's available to them in terms of achieving that data.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Chris Ballard: Thank you to the minister for his response and dedication to ensuring that Ontario's communities are as prepared as possible for potential floods.

Water levels remain high in parts of Ontario, as is common for this time of year, and we expect high-water conditions to continue for several weeks.

In northern Ontario, a late spring snow melt, accompanied by above-average snow pack and significant rainfall, can lead to flooding. As we know, these floods can shut down roads, flood homes and, in extreme circumstances, lead to evacuations. Residents from all parts of Ontario need to know that, in the event of an emergency such as a flood, our province has proper response plans in place.

Through you, Mr. Speaker: Can the minister please tell the House how our government prepares to respond to emergencies such as floods in our province?

Hon. Bill Mauro: Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: Thanks to the member from Newmarket–Aurora for asking a very important question.

Each spring, many communities across Ontario are confronted with the possibility of flooding as winter snow melts and river ice breaks up. Just last night, the member from Prince Edward–Hastings and I were reminiscing about visiting Belleville last year when they were fighting the floods in their community.

1130

Our most important priority is the safety and security of all Ontarians, and that means, well before we begin to

enjoy warmer weather, that the Office of the Fire Marshal and Emergency Management, also known as OFMEM, prepares host communities to accept evacuees. This ensures that during a flood, people in affected communities have a safe place to go.

Throughout the flood season, OFMEM maintains regular contact with municipalities and ministries to assess the risk from flooding and ensure that we have the most up-to-date information. If an evacuation is necessary, OFMEM works closely with the Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry to coordinate flights out of affected communities.

ENERGY POLICIES

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: My question is to the Deputy Premier. Last week you released your new carbon pay-to-pollute scheme, and your own Premier admitted herself that she was adding a tax. We know that this is because the price of everything will increase. What we don't know are the details on it. Instead, you have left Ontarians in the dark about how much you will be taking out of their wallets.

Deputy Premier, families can't afford to manage their budgets the way you do. They can't run deficits for 11 years and shrug off hundreds of billions of dollars of debt.

Deputy Premier, will you commit to not implementing another devastating tax onto the people of Ontario?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: The Minister of the Environment and Climate Change.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: Mr. Speaker, I actually have a question for the member opposite.

Interjections.

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

Please finish.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: I think she might be helpful in helping me understand something. When her party introduced a cap-and-trade on NO_x and SO_x, they didn't call it a tax on everything. When they did it again on carbon monoxide, they didn't call it a tax on everything. When the Alberta government—their sister party in Alberta—did it, they didn't call it a tax on everything. Why is that? Because it's not a tax on everything. It's an effective carbon trading market.

But given their party's lack of concern—and their federal cousins', with zero investment in climate change, who took us out of Kyoto and are undermining efforts right now to get an international agreement in Paris—I would be pretty embarrassed if I was a card-carrying Conservative today too.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: Speaker, I have to go back to the Deputy Premier. The bottom line is that when costs go up for business, the cost of living goes up for everyone. Ontarians cannot afford another tax that will go to fund the scandal-plagued, mismanaged Liberal govern-

ment. Liberal mismanagement in this province has already seriously affected the lives of all Ontarians.

In my riding alone, we have a hospital in disarray from broken Liberal promises. We have seniors who can't afford diabetic test strips, and families who cannot afford their hydro bill. And here you are: You're wanting to add another tax on them. This will be devastating to the people across the province. They can't afford your arrogance any longer.

Deputy Premier, as the fourth of our five budget asks, will you commit, in your 2015 budget, not to levy another misguided tax on the people of Ontario?

Hon. Glen R. Murray: Mr. Speaker, let me share with the member what I think Ontarians can't afford. The residents of Goderich, in her constituency, can't afford another devastating tornado. They can't afford it.

The people in Burlington cannot afford to see their operating rooms wiped out by 100-year floods, two in 24 months—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Nepean–Carleton is warned. Thank you.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: Apple farmers in rural Ontario can't afford to lose 80% of their crop anymore. People who get their drinking water from Lake Ontario can't afford to risk it going toxic so they can't even boil it. Ontarians can't afford more frequent ice storms. People who ride GO Transit can't afford \$600 million of damage in one hour, Mr. Speaker. We can't afford—

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

ENERGY CONSERVATION

Mr. Peter Tabuns: My question is to the Deputy Premier. Today is Earth Day. It's a day to think about the environment, to think about sustainability and conservation. However, this government has had a problem sustaining its energy conservation programs.

In 2010, the government cut the Ontario Home Energy Savings Program, which helped people reduce their heating bill with grants to retrofit their homes and make them more energy-efficient. Since then, energy costs have skyrocketed. Why did this government cancel this important home energy conservation program?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: To the Minister of Energy.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: The member would know that in our long-term energy plan of December 2013, "conservation first" is the overriding principle of that plan, Mr. Speaker. He will also know that throughout November and December of this past year, every LDC, every utility across the province, signed on to a new conservation framework. It is a very extensive program. It gives more authority to the LDCs to initiate conservation that is relevant to their particular communities.

We are conservation first. We're going to continue on that, and our projections are that there will be very, very extensive take-up.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Well, Speaker, this is a government that loves to make announcements—loves it. But it's the follow-through that counts.

Seven years ago, the government announced an agreement with Quebec to create a cap-and-trade system by January 2010. The NDP welcomed the announcement. But seven years later, we're still waiting—and Speaker, I was there for the reannouncement, if that's their answer.

In 2013, the government announced a plan to help homeowners conserve energy with on-bill financing for energy retrofits. It's now 2015, and there is still no such program.

Mr. Speaker, will Ontarians have to wait another seven years for action on energy conservation, just as we have had to wait seven years on cap-and-trade?

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: Minister of the Environment.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: Well, if you were listening to the question from your friends next door, you will know you wouldn't have to wait very long for a carbon market.

Second of all, we are doing unprecedented things right now, Mr. Speaker, in building standards and building codes. Thank you to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing and his predecessors for initiating standards that are actually bringing down greenhouse gases and emissions. We're just beginning, because, working with the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, the Minister of Economic Development and the Minister of Energy, we are about to introduce some of the most robust initiatives in reducing building-based greenhouse gas emissions, providing Ontarians with lower costs of heating their homes.

I'm working closely with the Minister of Transportation, who is doing globe-leading work right now in the electrification of transit. We are making the biggest investments in public transit in the history of Ontario and some of the biggest in the history of North America. You don't have to wait for a bus very long anymore, Mr. Speaker, thanks to this government.

CONSUMER PROTECTION

Mr. Arthur Potts: My question is for the Minister of Government and Consumer Services. I think we can all agree that the spring weather that we're finally having and enjoying presents a welcome relief following the great winter that has just passed.

As my constituents of Beaches–East York are quick to remind me, with spring comes a whole host of new responsibilities for homeowners. Yard maintenance, lawn care, seasonal cleaning and other landscaping needs are all tasks that many homeowners are taking up with the use of service providers. Seasonal yard work is important, and it creates valuable opportunities for entrepreneurs and Ontario businesses. With the short-term and the sometimes informal nature of these services, however, many of us are concerned and worried about the legitimacy of the agreements that are entered into with the service providers.

Will the Minister of Government and Consumer Services address the concern and speak to how his ministry regulates home service contracts?

Hon. David Oraziatti: I want to thank the member from Beaches–East York for raising this important consumer protection issue. I agree that this type of seasonal work creates excellent employment opportunities.

We also realize that, with the rush to receive these services, consumers are vulnerable to entering into agreements with ambiguous or confusing terms, sometimes dictated over the phone. Agreements should be completed in person, and consumers should request a written estimate for the services they receive. I strongly encourage all consumers not to commit to payments from a random sales call. If a company presents a good deal, consider the terms thoroughly and know that you're entitled to a written contract. Terms and conditions surrounding continuous services should be carefully reviewed.

Providing clear, contractual agreements for consumers is a priority, and our government continues to strengthen these services for our consumers.

1140

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Arthur Potts: I'm delighted by the response the minister has given us about this very important area of concern for Ontario consumers.

We agree, and I agree, that lawn care companies make unique and important contributions to our seasonal economy. It's how I got through university. Most Ontarians have either used such a company, worked for one or they know somebody who had relied on their services in the past. It's important that we instill confidence in Ontarians that their government is contributing to a fair and competitive marketplace.

I know the Ministry of Government and Consumers Services has a strong history of enforcing fair consumer standards for Ontarians. I tell my concerned constituents in Beaches–East York that when they file complaints, they will receive decisive actions that will be taken up on their behalf. It's very important that we protect consumers at every stage of these relationships.

Can the Minister of Government and Consumer Services please speak to action the ministry has taken to protect consumers specifically in dealing with lawn care companies?

Hon. David Oraziatti: Again to the member from Beaches–East York, thank you for the question. Our ministry continues to monitor this issue closely and has taken action when necessary. In 2014, we received 124 complaints with regard to this particular issue. We've demanded that companies are practising good and safe consumer practices with respect to providing written contracts for consumers. We've insisted that they cease to renew contracts if they don't have the consent of the consumer. I'm pleased with our track record in this area. We're happy to act on these issues when they're brought to our attention in the ministry.

I would say that with respect to these particular contracts, you should be, if you're charged improperly for

any type of service, immediately contacting the business, writing a letter and following up with them. If they refuse to act on that, contact the ministry and we'll be pleased to follow up and respond on behalf of the consumer.

ONTARIO RETIREMENT PENSION PLAN

Mrs. Julia Munro: My question is to the Deputy Premier. You've said that a mandatory Ontario pension plan would be good for the province, yet your own ministry has a document which supports the notion that 54,000 people will lose their jobs. That's not the only—people will have reduced or eliminated their own existing pension plans.

On behalf of Ontarians, the PC caucus has identified five key commitments we need to see from your budget or your government in order to support your budget. This is one. Premier, will you commit, in your 2015 budget, to saving jobs and abandoning the Ontario pension plan?

Interjections.

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

I want to remind some members that there's a W behind their names.

Deputy Premier.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: To the Associate Minister of Finance.

Hon. Mitzie Hunter: I want to thank the member opposite for this question. The implementation of the Ontario Retirement Pension Plan is actually all about Ontario's future economy. We know that if people retire without adequate income in retirement, that has the potential to slow down consumption. If we have consumption that is slowed down, that could potentially slow down investments that are made in business, and that could hurt Ontario's economy.

Our plan, which is to implement the ORPP for January 2017, is all about growing Ontario's economy, because people will have an adequate income for life that they will spend into their retirement. That's good for business, that's good for Ontario's economy and that's certainly good for our future retirees. When it comes to being mindful of the impact on business, we're taking that into consideration as well.

VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Point of order from the member from Davenport.

Mrs. Cristina Martins: I would like to welcome members and staff of the Davenport-Perth Neighbourhood and Community Health Centre's civic engagement group to Queen's Park today. They were in attendance here at question period and will be touring the Legislative Assembly to learn about how government works. Welcome to that group.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Member from Newmarket–Aurora, point of order.

Mr. Chris Ballard: Mr. Speaker, it's not a point of order. I would like to welcome students from Light of Christ Catholic Elementary School in Newmarket–Aurora.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Actually, the member is absolutely correct. It is not a point of order to introduce, but I give a little leeway there.

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

Motion agreed to.

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

The House recessed from 1154 to 1500.

DEFERRED VOTES

TIME ALLOCATION

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): We have a deferred vote on the motion for allocation of time on Bill 80, An Act to amend the Ontario Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act and the Animals for Research Act with respect to the possession and breeding of orcas and administrative requirements for animal care.

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

The division bells rang from 1145 to 1150.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): On April 21, Mr. Bradley moved government notice of motion number 20. All those in favour of the motion please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Albanese, Laura	Flynn, Kevin Daniel	Meilleur, Madeleine
Anderson, Granville	Fraser, John	Milczyn, Peter Z.
Baker, Yvan	Gravelle, Michael	Moridi, Reza
Balkissoon, Bas	Hoggarth, Ann	Murray, Glen R.
Ballard, Chris	Hoskins, Eric	Naidoo-Harris, Indira
Berardinetti, Lorenzo	Hunter, Mitzie	Naqvi, Yasir
Bradley, James J.	Jaczek, Helena	Oraziotti, David
Chiarelli, Bob	Kiwala, Sophie	Potts, Arthur
Colle, Mike	Kwinter, Monte	Qaadri, Shafiq
Coteau, Michael	MacCharles, Tracy	Rinaldi, Lou
Crack, Grant	Mangat, Amrit	Sandals, Liz
Damerla, Dipika	Martins, Cristina	Sergio, Mario
Del Duca, Steven	Matthews, Deborah	Thibeault, Glenn
Delaney, Bob	Mauro, Bill	Vernile, Daiene
Dhillon, Vic	McGarry, Kathryn	Wong, Soo
Dong, Han	McMahon, Eleanor	Wynne, Kathleen O.
Duguid, Brad	McMeekin, Ted	Zimmer, David

All those opposed, please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Nays

Armstrong, Teresa J.	Hatfield, Percy	Nicholls, Rick
Arnott, Ted	Hillier, Randy	Pettapiece, Randy
Bailey, Robert	Horwath, Andrea	Sattler, Peggy
Bisson, Gilles	Hudak, Tim	Scott, Laurie
Clark, Steve	Jones, Sylvia	Singh, Jagmeet
Fife, Catherine	MacLaren, Jack	Smith, Todd
Forster, Cindy	MacLeod, Lisa	Tabuns, Peter
French, Jennifer K.	Mantha, Michael	Thompson, Lisa M.
Gates, Wayne	Martow, Gila	Vanthof, John
Gélinas, France	McDonell, Jim	Walker, Bill
Gretzky, Lisa	Miller, Norm	Wilson, Jim
Hardeman, Ernie	Miller, Paul	Yakabuski, John
Harris, Michael	Munro, Julia	Yurek, Jeff

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 51; the nays are 39.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: I ask everyone in the House to join me in welcoming the president and founder of Meningitis Relief Canada, Furakh Mir, who is in the gallery today, as well as Sarabjit Kaur.

Hon. Bill Mauro: Speaker, with your indulgence, I have several guests in the east members' gallery that I'd like to introduce today: Anna Baggio, CPAWS Wildlands League; Roger Barber, Resolute Forest Products; Dana Collins, Canadian Institute of Forestry; Erik Holmstrom, from Weyerhaeuser; Dale Kaemingh, Manitou Forest Products; Rick—I practised this one, too—Ksiezopolski, Norbord; Sylvain Levesque, Georgia-Pacific; Jamie Lim and Christine Leduc, Ontario Forest Industries Association; Jamie McRae, McRae Lumber; Brian Nicks, EACOM Timber Corp.; Michael O'Blenis, AV Terrace Bay; Ailbe Prendiville, Kenora Forest Products; Fred Pinto, from the Ontario Professional Foresters Association; Dana Shaw, from Shaw Lumber; Norm Stephenson, from Columbia Forest Products; and Al Thorne, from Tembec. I welcome them all to Queen's Park.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Welcome.

Ms. Jennifer K. French: It is my pleasure to welcome to Queen's Park today Carmen Santoro, president of the Ontario Professional Fire Fighters Association. He is joined by our Oshawa Professional Firefighters Association Local 465 president, Steve Barkwell. Welcome to Queen's Park.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Welcome. Further introductions? It is now time for members' statements.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

BILL BLAIR

Mr. Jim Wilson: Today I rise to mark the retirement of Toronto police chief Bill Blair. Chief Blair's term officially ends on April 26, 10 years from the date he was appointed. His tenure over the last decade has been significant and important, as he juggled the many challenges involved in running the largest police force in the country. He's a cop's cop, having worked alongside the members of his force for more than 30 years, coming up through the ranks to the position of top cop.

Prior to his days as chief, Bill Blair worked in many different areas of the Toronto Police Service. Starting as a beat officer in downtown Toronto—a somewhat differ-

ent downtown in those days, I suspect, than we see today—his career saw him involved in some of the most challenging areas of policing. Drug enforcement, organized crime and major criminal investigations were all areas of the force that Chief Blair spent time in, broadening his experience.

Among the many achievements he has had as chief, the development and implementation of the Toronto Anti-Violence Intervention Strategy stands out as an innovative way to go about combatting violent crime.

As chief, he has spent the last 10 years working with members of his force, various levels of government and the city as a whole—a valued member of the Toronto community through his involvement in a variety of organizations such as Covenant House and the United Way.

It would be remiss of me not to mention that Chief Blair and I share the same alma mater, the University of Toronto. While I'm pretty sure we weren't there at quite the same time and we didn't major in the same courses—he having completed his degree in economics and criminology—I'm pleased to say that we are both graduates of that wonderful place across the street, and to announce that Chief Blair hasn't really left, as he's now going to lecture at the University of Toronto.

As his time as Toronto chief of police draws to a close, I'm proud to stand in this House and join members of the PC caucus—and, I'm sure, all members of the House—and ask my fellow members to congratulate Chief Blair for a job very well done.

WORLD MENINGITIS DAY

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: Again, as I introduced Furakh Mir, founder and president of Meningitis Relief Canada, I also want to raise my voice on this issue. During the last session, I introduced a bill recognizing April 24 of every year as World Meningitis Day in this province. I'm happy to see that this bill is being reintroduced, and it has the full support of the New Democrats.

Meningitis Relief Canada has done some incredible work in raising awareness around this very troubling and dangerous disease. It has worked towards educating people around the symptoms and dangers of meningitis. It's a charity. It provides counselling and support for people and families who are dealing with meningitis.

It also has the important mandate of raising awareness of this disease, which does not have enough awareness. Meningitis is something that can appear quite suddenly. Because it looks like the flu, it's very hard to detect, and often the crucial detection in the early hours is very important in order to treat this disease. Tragically, it can be fatal in one or two days.

About 1,000 people die from meningitis every year. Public awareness is key. It's so important that we're better informed, better aware, of the dangers of meningitis, and that's why recognizing April 24 as World Meningitis Day is so important. By proclaiming this day, we can ensure that there's a platform to ensure that there's further education and awareness around the symp-

toms and what can be done to address this very dangerous disease. We can ensure that no one else has to lose a loved one to this very serious and tragic disease.

Again, it's my hope to see this bill passed and April 24 will be recognized as World Meningitis Day in Ontario.

NATIONAL ORGAN AND TISSUE DONATION AWARENESS WEEK

Ms. Soo Wong: I'm pleased to rise today to recognize this week as National Organ and Tissue Donation Awareness Week. Tonight I'm looking forward to attending the Scarborough Hospital CAC community education session on organ and tissue donation, and I applaud the work of the CAC to promote awareness of this important issue.

Each year, the lives of more than 2,000 Ontarians are saved or enhanced through organ donations. One organ and tissue donor can save eight lives and improve the lives of up to 75 others.

Unfortunately, there are hundreds of people on the wait-list, including 102 Scarborough residents. Every three days, someone on that list dies waiting for a transplant. Unfortunately, less than 25% of eligible Ontarians are registered as donors. In Scarborough, it's only 11%, Mr. Speaker.

In 2012, a constituent of mine, Mohan Bissoondial, founded the Scarborough Gift of Life Association. A double corneal transplant recipient, Mohan has made it his mission to spread donor awareness among Scarborough's diverse community. I want to thank Mohan and his dedicated group of volunteers for promoting awareness of organ and tissue donation.

Speaker, it only takes two minutes to become a donor by signing up online at beadonor.ca. I encourage every eligible Ontarian to be a donor, as each one of us can make a difference in the lives of so many.

TOWN OF GANANOQUE

Mr. Steve Clark: I stand to congratulate the town of Gananoque for recently being recognized as a youth-friendly community by Play Works, an organization that is dedicated to engaging Ontario's youth in their communities.

The town received this award thanks to a group of seven students from Gananoque Intermediate and Secondary School who worked with the Leeds, Grenville and Lanark health unit through the school's co-operative education program in order to determine the youth-friendliness level of the town of Gananoque. They assessed this by conducting youth surveys, interviewing community program co-ordinators, and meeting with municipal leaders.

Through the dedicated research efforts of these students, they determined that Gananoque met the criteria necessary to be designated a Bronze Youth Friendly Community Builder. They prepared and applied for the award, which was presented to the students on March 25 at the annual Parks and Recreation Ontario Awards in

Collingwood by the Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport.

This designation acknowledges that the town of Gananoque has a number of excellent programs and services to offer families and youth, and recognizes the positive impact of community-youth partnerships.

I would like to thank the seven students for their hard work in making Gananoque one of only five Ontario communities to receive this designation this year. These students were Brynn Glover, Jill Kellogg, Sierra Williams-Selby, Brie Lackie, Ashley Vanderscheer, Sydney Albertson and Chelsea Heikamp.

I wish warm congratulations to the town of Gananoque for achieving this designation and, again, thank the students, the health unit, the town and all the other partners that played a role in making this possible.

FRENCH-LANGUAGE SERVICES

SERVICES EN FRANÇAIS

Ms. Jennifer K. French: It is always my privilege to speak in this Legislature, and today I am pleased to address the assembly en français because Oshawa is almost there in achieving designation under the French Language Services Act. We have until May 25 to make comments, and I know we'll be successful.

Oshawa est une communauté riche et diversifiée. J'ai hâte d'avoir l'occasion de reconnaître et de célébrer notre désignation en vertu de la Loi sur les services en français. Je suis honorée de faire partie du processus et d'avoir la chance d'apporter mon soutien à tous ceux et celles qui ont tant lutté pour cette désignation.

1510

Tous les Ontariens et Ontariennes méritent l'égalité d'accès aux services publics, et ceci est une étape importante dans cette direction pour Oshawa. Cela a été un voyage long et ardu pour notre communauté francophone grandissante, et je suis heureuse de voir que leur engagement va finalement être reconnu.

La présente désignation n'est pas pour l'ensemble de la région, mais c'est tout de même un grand pas dans la bonne direction.

Merci, monsieur le Président, et je veux dire félicitations à notre communauté francophone et dynamique.

Le Président (L'hon. Dave Levac): Merci beaucoup.

HEALTHY HEART DAY

Mrs. Kathryn McGarry: I'm pleased to rise today to discuss the 11th annual Healthy Heart Day that took place in Cambridge this past Saturday, April 18.

Healthy Heart Day was organized by Dr. Shekhar Pandey, a cardiologist at the Cambridge Cardiac Care Centre. Dr. Pandey is committed to the overall awareness of healthy living, and organized this event to provide my constituents the opportunity to learn about what they can do to ensure good heart health.

I joined the survivors' walk, which began bright and early, to celebrate survivors of cardiac conditions. The main event opened at 8:30 in St. Benedict school, and several hundred people attended, to learn about natural strategies for health. Dr. Mike Lawrie discussed the benefits of becoming physically fit.

The keynote lecture, given by Dr. Peter Lin, emphasized a broad concept of healthy living. Dr. Lin encouraged participants to focus on lifestyle changes and preventative measures, such as yoga and healthy eating, that will enrich their lives and improve their cardiac health.

Dr. Pandey's commitment to health is multi-generational. Two of his teenaged sons, Arjun and Avinash, spoke at the 2015 Breathe! Gala in January about their role as budding medical researchers.

The Cambridge Healthy Heart Day was a huge success. I want to thank Dr. Pandey, his team, and all the volunteers for their dedication to a happier and healthier Ontario.

ONTARIO BUDGET

Mr. Michael Harris: Yesterday I had the rare opportunity in Ontario to see what it looks like when a government puts the work into getting its fiscal house in order. While the Wynne Liberals wait for that day when, in the words of Justin Trudeau, "the budget will balance itself," Conservatives roll up their sleeves and make the tough decisions for a new balanced budget.

Here in Ontario, after the Liberal government dragged us into a have-not status, we've seen \$14 billion in transfer payments flow from Ottawa, and yet they still can't balance the budget. In fact, as the Harper government balances the books, the Wynne Liberals continue to increase their deficit to a level 68% higher than those of all other provinces and territories combined. Apparently, budgets do not, in fact, balance themselves.

While Ontario suffers through a decade-plus of Liberal waste, mismanagement and scandal, the federal surplus in Ottawa means new opportunities for Canadians. When you get your fiscal house in order, Speaker, you can help families and businesses.

Even as Ontario sells Hydro One to pay off Liberal spending-addiction debts, federal Conservatives are delivering a \$27-billion package of family-focused tax cuts, including an expansion of the universal child care benefit. Now, that's leadership: taking better care of people by first taking care of our economic priorities.

We must also acknowledge the legacy of the late Jim Flaherty.

So while the Liberal regime digs us in deeper to feed their overspending habit tomorrow, people in Ontario can take some solace that there is one level of government looking out for them, and that would be the one on Parliament Hill with a balanced budget.

MAPLEFEST

Mr. Granville Anderson: We are very fortunate in my riding to host a number of street festivals—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock, please. My patience is a little bit over when it comes to the statements. The tradition is to dedicate it to your own riding and things that are happening in your community. I'm going to say that, and now I'm going to say that now everyone will be able to put their statements without interruption, even from your own side. Thank you.

Mr. Granville Anderson: It's one of the benefits of living in a beautiful historic community like Durham. In Bowmanville this weekend, we will be celebrating Maplefest, and what could be more Canadian? Maplefest gives our local business owners, producers and farmers an opportunity to meet the community and expand the efforts of Durham residents to shop locally.

I welcome everyone here at Queen's Park and across Ontario to visit Bowmanville for a hot pancake breakfast, maple doughnuts, cheese, candy, fudge and so much more. I encourage Durham residents to buy local and to enjoy Maplefest this Saturday, starting at 9 a.m. sharp.

FERTILIZER

Mr. Grant Crack: As a former golf course construction supervisor and superintendent, this member's statement is right up my alley.

All members of the House can agree that Ontario's agricultural sector is a driving force behind job creation here in our province. The food grown on our farms in Ontario helps feed the growing population of our province, our country and the world. The farming, food processing and food distribution industry supports nearly 158,000 jobs.

A crucial component of maximizing crop yield is by using fertilizers and supplements. Fertilizers help to replenish essential nutrients in the soil that crops need. Using them in an effective manner helps crops grow while minimizing the impact on the environment.

In fact, the Canadian Fertilizer Institute is taking the lead to ensure that farms across Canada are using fertilizers in a safe and efficient manner, such as the implementation of 4R nutrient stewardship, a strategy to reduce nutrient runoff and minimize greenhouse gas emissions. The principles of the 4R nutrient stewardship are right source, right rate, right time and right place, and this has proven to be an adaptable approach to improving fertilizer use.

The fertilizer industry is currently working with the government of Ontario, the Ontario Agri Business Association and the Grain Farmers of Ontario to promote these principles and to develop a larger research network to further knowledge of these impacts. In my riding of Glengarry–Prescott–Russell, MacEwen Agricentre has demonstrated leadership and recently was named the 4R retailer of the year.

Together, we can take steps to ensure that crops grow strong and healthy here in Ontario by receiving the right nutrients and also ensure that the impact to the environment is minimal.

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 Mr. Balkissoon assumes ballot item number 60 and Mrs. Mangat assumes ballot item number 46.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

MENINGITIS AWARENESS DAY ACT, 2015

LOI DE 2015 SUR LE JOUR DE LA SENSIBILISATION À LA MÉNINGITE

Mr. Yakabuski moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 90, An Act to proclaim Meningitis Awareness Day / Projet de loi 90, Loi proclamant le Jour de la sensibilisation à la méningite.

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): Now I will ask the member for a short statement.

Mr. John Yakabuski: It's going to be short, but I wanted to make sure I got it right: This bill proclaims April 24 in each year as Meningitis Awareness Day.

MOTIONS

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

Hon. Reza Moridi: Mr. Speaker, I believe you will find that we have unanimous consent to put forward a motion without notice regarding private members' public business.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities and Research and Innovation requests to put forward a motion without notice. Do we agree? Agreed.

Minister?

Hon. Reza Moridi: I move that, notwithstanding standing order 98(g), notice for ballot item number 46 be waived.

1520

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The minister moves that, notwithstanding standing order 98(g), notice

for ballot item number 46 be waived. Do we agree? Agreed. Carried.

Motion agreed to.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

FOREST INDUSTRY

Hon. Bill Mauro: I'm pleased to rise in the Legislature today during Earth Week to speak about how important the forest industry is to our government and to the province.

Ontario is home to about 71 million hectares of forest and about 85 billion trees. Our forests provide a wide range of benefits to each of us, and I can assure the members of the House of our government's unwavering commitment to our province's forests and to our province's forest industry.

Our government has committed to protecting over 225,000 square kilometres of northern Ontario through the Far North Act, which includes large swaths of the boreal forest. We are committed to sustainable forest management practices that ensure the long-term health of our forests while also supporting economic prosperity for present and future generations. That is why we have put in place a regulatory framework that is grounded in science and that is open and transparent to those that may be affected.

We harvest at sustainable levels. The actual harvest occurs on only 0.6% of the managed forest. This framework includes an independent forest audit on every management unit at regular intervals. Where issues are identified, the ministry takes appropriate action. In fact, through careful environmental stewardship, we're not only protecting our forests and the species that call them home, but we are also helping to create good jobs in Ontario while marketing our world-class forestry sector on the global stage.

Speaker, our forest industry has been at the table with government to ensure that Ontario's rigorous forest management practices promote the long-term health of our forests. Working together, we have become world leaders in sustainable forest management.

Almost 80% of Ontario's managed crown forests are third-party certified—almost 80%. That compares with just 10% globally. Forest certification provides customers with confidence that our wood meets third-party ecological, economic and social standards, and with growing demand for certified wood, Ontario has a significant competitive advantage.

Our government is working to increase awareness of our forest sector's excellent track record, and we're making the right investments to support Ontario's forest industry. In fact, our government has invested over \$1.3 billion in our forest industry through a range of programs, such as the provincial forest access roads funding

program and the Northern Industrial Electricity Rate Program.

The provincial forest access roads funding program benefits not only the forest industry, but all users. These roads provide essential rural infrastructure for emergency preparedness and response.

We recently announced a permanent investment of up to \$120 million per year under the Northern Industrial Electricity Rate Program. This certainly may encourage even more investment in Ontario's forestry sector.

We also held the largest wood supply competition in Ontario's history, and we continue to work with municipalities, with aboriginal communities and with the forest industry to modernize our forest tenure system.

Our government launched the Ontario Wood brand, and we're working with industry partners to promote Ontario wood. When they see the Ontario Wood brand, Ontarians will know that they are helping to support jobs in our province, and reducing their environmental impact by using a resource that is both attractive and renewable.

Last September, our government changed the building code to enable wood-framed buildings of up to six storeys. It is estimated that this one policy change alone will result in an increase in sales in the range of \$150 million to \$200 million a year.

We know Ontario's forest industry is more than just lumber. Over the past six years, we have worked with the Bluewater Wood Alliance, a cluster of over 60 secondary wood products producers in southwestern Ontario's traditional furniture and hardwood flooring industry.

We also have a growing wood pellet industry. Last year, the Atikokan generating station completed its conversion. It's now fuelled entirely by wood pellets. Those pellets are being harvested and processed in northern Ontario. Ontario suppliers are also providing wood pellets to international buyers, and there are opportunities to use pellets to replace diesel generation for remote communities.

I am pleased to see increases in the use of biomass energy. Biomass helps reduce greenhouse gas emissions and mitigates the effects of climate change.

Our forest industry has been through challenging times in recent years, but we're seeing positive developments. Companies are investing millions in communities like Hornepayne, Atikokan, Ignace, Thunder Bay and others. Greater demand for wood products, increased US housing starts and a lower Canadian dollar are all helping to contribute to the recovery. Ontario's forest products exports are increasing.

We still face challenges, but we're heading in a positive direction. The combination of a market that's on the upswing and our government's ongoing support bodes well for the Ontario forest sector. This is an important sector. It generates over \$11 billion in economic activity and supports over 170,000 people in 260 communities across Ontario, in both the north and in the south as well.

As Ontario's Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry, I want to recognize everyone who works in our

industry for their contributions to our province. Ensuring that we maintain sustainable forest management is essential for industry and for our province. We've got an excellent track record, which we continually strive to improve. By doing so, we're protecting our natural environment and securing economic opportunities for present and future generations. Speaker, thank you for your time.

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

Mr. Jeff Yurek: I would like to thank the minister for his words on Ontario's sustainable forestry sector.

I know that on this side of the House we are very proud of our forestry sector. I know, as I'm sure the minister does, that when someone buys Ontario wood, that they are buying one of, if not the best, managed natural resources in the world.

We all want forest products that are sourced using sustainable forest management. I am proud of our province's forestry sector for being one of the most sustainable and climate-change-friendly sectors.

As you may or may not know, Mr. Speaker, Ontario's wood products sector harvests 210,000 hectares annually, about one third of 1% of Ontario's forested areas, and three times less than the average amount lost to natural disturbance such as fire, insects and wind.

I know that Ontario's forestry sector takes pride in their work in creating jobs and establishing a sustainable resource for generations to come. Approximately 80% of Ontario's crown lands managed for forest operations in Ontario are certified by independent, internationally recognized certification systems. Our forest practices are governed by a world-class, platinum standard regulatory framework that includes the protection of species at risk and their habitat.

I am proud to say that Ontario's forestry sector maintains a sustainable harvest. In over a span of just five years, forestry companies in Ontario have planted over half a billion trees. That's an average of 131 million trees a year.

The forestry sector affects everyone throughout our province. Today, mills across the province operate and produce a variety of products ranging from newsprint to specialty papers, veneers, cardboards, lumber, plywood and strand board. The forestry sector has produced as much as 3.3 billion board feet of lumber, 7.2 million metric tonnes of pulp and paper, 5.2 billion square feet of panels, veneer and other value-added wood products annually.

The forestry sector employs, both directly and indirectly, 200,000 people across the province. The forestry industry is one of this province's and the country's largest industrial employers.

We know that the sector's future success is dependent on the health of the forest resource, and we congratulate the industry for making tremendous achievements in sustainable forest management. Thanks to their dedication, Ontario's forest practices are among the world's best.

I commend the forestry industry on fully utilizing their resource. Whole logs are used to make lumber, while wood chips left over from the lumber-making process become the raw material for pulp and particleboard. Hog fuel, which contains bark and other wood waste, is burned for energy. Biosolids, which includes wood fibres, the organic by-products of effluent treatment and mineral matter such as clay and lime, are used as soil conditioners on agricultural land.

1530

The forestry industry is a major contributor to the economy in Ontario. For every dollar generated by the industry, approximately 16 cents is paid to the government. In short, the forest industry is helping to meet the economic, environmental and social needs of Canadians without jeopardizing the ability of future generations to carry on the industry.

However, Mr. Speaker, I must also point out that this government needs to do more for the industry. As the forestry sector grows as a result of market rebound, companies are looking to invest in production and create more jobs. Ontario needs to address the elephant in the room—industrial electricity rates. As a primary resource industry, forestry is energy-intensive.

The government has introduced a number of programs that provide some relief from the steady rise in electricity pricing. However, given the government's own projections in the recent long-term energy plan, these benefits are quickly being erased along with any small competitive advantage. A coherent encompassing energy policy will allow manufacturers to reduce costs, make investments and maintain jobs. We must ensure that our industry remains in Ontario instead of moving to cheaper jurisdictions such as Quebec. Ontario must have competitive energy rates.

The minister and this government know that Ontario's sustainable forestry sector, with proper public policy, such as that brought forward by Nipissing member Vic Fedeli's wood frame buildings act a year or two ago—congratulations, Vic—competitive measures and competitive electricity rates will continue to flourish and our forestry sector will maintain jobs for generations to come.

On behalf of the PC Party, I'd like to thank those who work in the forestry industry for their contribution to our province.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: On behalf of the New Democrats and our leader Andrea Horwath, I want to first of all acknowledge that those who work in the forest industry, quite frankly, are a good example of how we can green our planet. A lot of people don't know the story, but the forest industry has been, for years, managing the forests in such a way that allows for the regeneration of oxygen on this planet probably beyond what people recognize.

We have been managing our forests in this province in a sustainable way for years. We have done that in such a way that watches the ecosystem to make sure that not only do we have a healthy forest when it comes to being able to harvest trees—and really, this is what this is, it's a

harvesting business. It's somewhat like farming except the flowers and the wheat are a little bit bigger. They're growing trees, but what we end up with is also a very healthy forest where animals and fauna are taken into account to make sure that we protect them as we do our forest activities. We've been doing this in northern Ontario, through our forest industry, for some years now.

I can tell you that, as a northerner, I get frustrated because a lot of people don't realize we're at the vanguard of this and sometimes we're accused, in northern Ontario and in the forest industry, of somehow being opposed to the greening of our planet and making sure that we do things right on the environmental side. I'm just here to say, we've been doing it for years and we'd like to have a little bit of recognition for that every now and then.

The other thing I want to say is that the minister says—and I want to say this in as gentle a way I can because I will be extremely critical. The government says, “Oh, there's such an importance to this industry, and this government knows that.” Well, you've got a funny way of showing it because, if you look at what industry has had to do for a number of years now, since the beginning of this Liberal administration, it has been to spend more time lobbying us, members of this assembly on all sides of the House, in order to deal with the myriad of things that this government has done that, quite frankly, have not led to a more efficient harvest, have not led to a more efficient industry, have not led to building a stronger economy, but have led to us having to basically try to protect what it is we've been doing for a long time, which is sustainable forest redevelopment.

I look at the government across the way and I think of the many things we've had to deal with, and I'm just going to go through a couple of them. The government says they've put in place the northern industrial program when it comes to electricity. Well, electricity prices used to be three times less than what they are now at the beginning of this privatization scheme. The very fact that the government had to put this program in place—and I've got to say it's necessary. If you didn't have that plan, there's a number of mills in my riding that would close their doors, as we've seen in Iroquois Falls, where that mill has closed its doors because we can't afford the electricity prices.

But the point I make is this: The very fact that the government has got to put those programs in place speaks to the lack and wrongheadedness of the policy when it comes to electricity in the province of Ontario and how it's really affected the bottom line of being able to operate in this industry and others.

The government crows that they've been able to invest in roads that lead to the forest when it comes to being able to do what we have to do in the forest. Well, it was the government in their own budget that withdrew money that was much-needed in order to be able to support the industry when it comes to making sure that we build roads that not only the industry uses—and this is the point—but local residents and other utilizers of the forest

use as well. It is everybody from the cottager to the people who pick blueberries to the First Nations people to the people who want to go hunt and fish to people who are in the exploration industry. Those roads are used by many people, and what we have is a government that says, “Well, we're going to slow down the tap when it comes to supporting this industry.”

We have no difficulty and I support making sure that we build infrastructure when we build new plants, whether it be a car plant or whatever in southern Ontario, because that is the cost of economic development. Governments come to the table; they provide what is much-needed infrastructure when it comes to attracting those investments. But where we do have the investment here already, industry has had to be at Queen's Park for the last 12 years to lobby to stop the erosion of the support of the infrastructure that is so needed within their industry when it comes to regulation, when it comes to legislation, when it comes to electricity prices and when it comes to what goes on generally in the industry.

So I say to my friends that are here today, there is hope. You've survived this long. You've survived this long because, quite frankly, you guys know what you're doing and you've been very effective. You've had good communities. You've had good partnerships with the people in the communities where your establishments are in the forest industry, be it a sawmill or a paper mill or whatever it might be. But we will continue working together because we understand, in northern Ontario, the importance of making sure that this industry not only stays, but that it prospers and that we allow the growth of this industry to go in a way that quite frankly it has not been able to for some time.

PETITIONS

TAXATION

Mr. Jim Wilson: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the Liberal government has indicated they plan on introducing a new carbon tax in 2015; and

“Whereas Ontario taxpayers have already been burdened with a health tax of \$300 to \$900 per person that doesn't necessarily go into health care, a \$2-billion smart meter program that failed to conserve energy, and households are paying almost \$700 more annually for unaffordable subsidies under the Green Energy Act; and

“Whereas a carbon tax scheme would increase the cost of everyday goods including gasoline and home heating; and

“Whereas the government continues to run unaffordable deficits without a plan to reduce spending while collecting \$30 billion more annually in tax revenues than 11 years ago; and

“Whereas the aforementioned points lead to the conclusion that the government is seeking justification to

raise taxes to pay for their excessive spending, without accomplishing any concrete targets;

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

“To abandon the idea of introducing yet another unaffordable and ineffective tax on Ontario families and businesses.”

That’s a year old but it’s still very, very pertinent. Thank you, and I will sign it.

SPECIAL-NEEDS CHILDREN

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: I have a petition called “Maintain the John McGivney Children’s Centre Preschool Program.”

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the John McGivney Children’s Centre annually helps about 2,500 children with physical, neurological and developmental challenges;

“Whereas the John McGivney Children’s Centre preschool program is an exceptional program administered by expert faculty and staff that offers youth and their families a transformative experience that they would not receive in a less specialized setting;

“Whereas the John McGivney Children’s Centre preschool program faces a shortfall in provincial funding;

“Whereas families raising children with special needs incur increased costs for care which the income test does not properly reflect;

“Whereas compliance with the provincial requirements means that the John McGivney Children’s Centre preschool program is unable to be sustained;

“Whereas the John McGivney Children’s Centre preschool program closure will mean a loss of a valued skill set of expertise from teachers and support staff in our community that will leave some of the area’s most vulnerable children and families without proper child care;

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

“To make up any funding shortfalls that result from transitioning to a fee subsidy model so that the John McGivney Children’s Centre preschool program can remain operational and consider changes the income test to better reflect the increased costs families raising children with special needs incur.”

I fully support this, will sign my name to it and give it to page Ishika.

1540

STUDENT SAFETY

Mrs. Kathryn McGarry: I have a petition addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

“Whereas there are no mandatory requirements for teachers and school volunteers to have completed CPR training in Ontario;

“Whereas the primary responsibility for the care and safety of students rests with each school board and its employees;

“Whereas the safety of children in elementary schools in Ontario should be paramount;

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

“To work in conjunction with all Ontario school boards to ensure that adequate CPR training is available to school employees and volunteers.”

I agree with the petition, affix my name and give it to page Mira to bring forward.

ENERGY POLICIES

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

“Whereas the Auditor General of Ontario defines the global adjustment charge on hydro bills as ‘an extra payment covered by ratepayers over and above the actual market price of electricity’; and

“Whereas wind power is simply unreliable, blows mostly at night when we don’t need power, creating a surplus Ontario then has to get rid of by paying Quebec and the United States to take it, and the total cost of producing the exported power was about \$2.6 billion more than the revenue Ontario received from exporting that power between 2006 and 2013; and

“Whereas the Auditor General says the global adjustment has risen from \$700 million prior to the Green Energy Act to \$7.7 billion by 2013, and over the past decade, the cumulated amount is about \$50 billion; and

“Whereas Ontario now has the highest industrial rates in North America, and residential hydro bills are forecast to increase 42% by 2018 after peak hydro rates have already more than tripled since 2003; and

“Whereas local First Nations, property owners and aviation and aerospace industry stakeholders have voiced concerns about wind farm installations proposed by Innergex in Merrick and Mattawan townships in the riding of Nipissing;

“We, the undersigned, do hereby petition the government of Ontario to reverse course on these proposed wind projects and the government’s expensive energy policy by cancelling feed-in-tariff (FIT) subsidies, implementing an immediate moratorium on wind power development, and giving municipalities veto authority over wind projects in their communities.”

I agree with this, sign my name and give it page Joshua.

ONTARIO NORTHLAND TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION

Mr. John Vanthof: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas northern Ontario communities are connected across long distances by bus service; and

“Whereas the ONTC bus service is the only form of public transportation available to many northern ... residents; and

“Whereas reduction of customer service and the closure of stations will cause deterioration of the overall system of public transportation of passengers and goods in northeastern Ontario; and

“Whereas the government of Ontario committed to providing enhanced bus service to alleviate the loss of the ONTC passenger rail service;

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

“Ontario Northland Transportation Commission bus service must be enhanced to ensure reliable and continuous accessibility including uniform provision of adequate public transportation for all communities and people of northern Ontario.”

I wholeheartedly agree and pass this petition to page Joshua.

LEGAL AID

Ms. Daiene Vernile: This is a petition titled “Population-Based Legal Services Funding.

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

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

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

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

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

I agree with this. I shall put my name to it and give it to page Samantha.

YOUTH SERVICES

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

“Whereas current provisions of the Child and Family Services Act prevent a children’s aid society from arranging temporary care for 16- and 17-year-olds who seek their assistance and have not been previously in care; and

“Whereas the inability to arrange care in a stable and nurturing family can expose youth to the risk of homelessness, criminality, poor education outcomes, and deteriorating physical and mental health; and

“Whereas at-risk 16- and 17-year-old youths without care can impose a greater cost on social service providers than the cost of arranging for two years of temporary care; and

“Whereas the Ontario Association of Children’s Aid Societies has repeatedly asked for 16- and 17-year-old

youths to be able to seek CAS assistance regarding temporary care; and

“Whereas Bill 88 won all-party support during the 40th Parliament and was reported back to the House for third reading by the Standing Committee on Social Policy;

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

“To pass Bill 54, the Right to Care Act.”

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

HOSPITAL FUNDING

M^{me} France Gélinas: I have those thousands of petitions that come from pretty near every hospital in Ontario, and they read as follows—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Excuse my interruption. That needs to be removed from your desk.

M^{me} France Gélinas: My petitions?

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Yes.

M^{me} France Gélinas: Where should I put them?

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Just set them down. That’s it. Now you’ve got it. It’s the ones you were facing out.

M^{me} France Gélinas: Am I good now?

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): You’ll lose them if it continues. Carry on.

M^{me} France Gélinas: Thank you, Speaker. I have those petitions that come from every hospital in Ontario. They read as follows:

“Whereas for seven years Ontario public hospitals have been deliberately underfunded and the last three years the hospital base budgets were frozen; and

“Whereas this is no way to achieve health care transformation in Ontario; and

“Whereas as health care professionals and support staff, we see our hospital administrators forced to make difficult decisions that adversely impact our patients and erode quality care;”

They ask the Legislative Assembly of Ontario “to urgently restore sustainable funding to our public hospitals and begin the process of capacity planning so that we can all work together towards a carefully planned, highly performing public health system.”

It was collected by members of OPSEU. I thank them, will support it, affix my name and ask Mira to bring it to the Clerk.

WATER FLUORIDATION

Mr. Bob Delaney: I have a petition addressed to the Ontario Legislative Assembly, coming from quite a number of people in Thunder Bay, Caledon and Georgetown. This is among the thousands we’ve been receiving from all over Ontario called “Fluoridate All Ontario Drinking Water.” It reads as follow:

“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, a concentration providing optimal dental health benefits, and well below the maximum acceptable concentration to protect against adverse health effects; 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 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’m pleased to sign and support this petition and to send it down with page Samantha.

CLIMATE CHANGE

Mr. Ted Arnott: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly, and it reads as follows:

“Whereas climate change, according to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), an internationally accepted authority on climate change, has concluded that the warming of the Earth’s climate system is unequivocal, and primarily driven by human activity;

“Whereas the Ontario government has pledged to adopt a carbon pricing policy as a first step in reducing our provincial carbon emissions by 80% by 2050;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to adopt the carbon pricing policy called Carbon Fee and Dividend, as the most economy-friendly, fastest, most transparent, least costly, most just and fair way to cut carbon emissions and assist Ontario citizens in the transition to a low-carbon environment.”

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

1550

DIAGNOSTIC SERVICES

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

“Whereas the Ontario government has made positron emission tomography (PET) scanning a publicly insured health service available to cancer and cardiac patients

under conditions where PET scans have been proven to be clinically effective;

“Whereas, since October 2009, insured PET scans are performed in Ottawa, London, Toronto, Hamilton and Thunder Bay; and

“Whereas the city of Greater Sudbury is a hub for health care in northeastern Ontario, with Health Sciences North, its regional cancer program and the Northern Ontario School of Medicine;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to make PET scans available through Health Sciences North, thereby serving and providing equitable access to the citizens of northeastern Ontario.”

It’s my pleasure to affix my signature to this petition and give it to page Mira.

WATER FLUORIDATION

Mrs. Kathryn McGarry: I have another petition addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“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 agree with the petition, affix my signature and give it to page Chloe.

OPPOSITION DAY

ONTARIO BUDGET

Mr. Jim Wilson: I move that, given the grave financial situation in the province of Ontario today, the Legislative Assembly of Ontario agree that the 2015 budget should include the following elements:

- an announcement that the Ontario Retirement Pension Plan will not be pursued, as it places an enormous burden on businesses and will kill jobs in this province;

- a commitment that a carbon tax, or its close cousin, a cap-and-trade process, not be adopted, as it is a cost that Ontario residents and businesses cannot afford;

- a plan to fix home care by streamlining the system to reduce the number of agencies patients must deal with and by tying community care access funding to outcomes and clearly defined results;

- a commitment to reduce energy prices so that all people and businesses no longer have to be paying some of the highest energy costs in North America; and finally

- a serious, credible and detailed plan to balance the budget by 2017-18.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Mr. Wilson has moved opposition day number three.

Mr. Wilson.

Mr. Jim Wilson: The Ontario PC caucus put forward this motion today because we're gravely concerned about the direction this province is going in under the Liberal government and very wary regarding what will be in the government's budget tomorrow.

This government has a history of fiscal mismanagement and a chronic spending problem. Their years of bad spending decisions are beginning to show up in the reductions to services that we're seeing across the province.

A number of weeks ago in this House I spoke of the size of the provincial debt and gave some examples of what services were being crowded out as a result of the interest payments on the \$288 billion worth of debt.

I said that we believed the Liberal government could do much better in its 2015 budget than it did in 2014, and, to help them to improve their fiscal performance and better deliver services, we would raise a number of key issues and suggestions to be included in tomorrow's budget.

Over the last few weeks, my colleagues and I have raised five different issues and put forward five sensible solutions. We've asked the government to include them in the 2015 budget to be delivered tomorrow. Only by embracing the direction we have laid out will the province begin to turn the corner, stop hurting people and start on a path to a better economy that will create jobs.

Again, the five items we asked the government to commit to in its budget are:

First, an announcement that the Ontario Retirement Pension Plan will not be pursued, as it places an enormous burden on businesses and individuals and will kill jobs in this province. The finance ministry's own internal

documents show that it will kill at least 18,000 jobs in its first year of introduction. This mandatory plan is another tax on both employers and their employees. It will mean less money today in people's pockets, which will affect their spending and ultimately affect the entire economy. The government is yet again trying to tell people how to spend their money. Mr. Speaker, most people know they have to save for their retirement. In fact, a study by the McKinsey consulting group reports that 83% of Canadians are already saving adequate amounts for their retirement. Any new proposal should be focusing on the 17% remaining who need a little bit more help with saving for their retirement. On top of all of this, the government has yet to provide a definition of what a comparable pension plan might be. Who knows what will happen with existing pension plans? I urge the government to take the opportunity tomorrow to say you have seen the light and tell us you will not be going ahead with this plan.

Our second ask is a commitment that a pay-to-pollute carbon tax or its close cousin, a cap-and-trade process, not be adopted, as it is a cost that Ontario residents and businesses cannot afford. This is merely another misguided tax that will create even more of a financial burden than people are already carrying. In the jurisdictions where it has been tried, cap and trade and carbon pricing have been a failure and have increased costs for all ratepayers while doing almost nothing to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. In last year's election, the Premier told the people of Ontario that she wouldn't implement a carbon tax. She should have stuck to this promise, but she does still have an opportunity to make up for what she's been saying about the tax recently and to tell the people in tomorrow's budget that she won't go ahead with this nonsense.

Our third request is a plan to fix home care by streamlining the system to reduce the number of agencies and the layers of bureaucracy that patients must deal with by tying community care access centre funding outcomes with clearly defined results. Health care providers, stakeholders, patients and their families have said that the system is broken. Currently, home care services are inadequate and inconsistent. If it's this bad today, what will it be like when we have even more seniors in the system? The Donner report, a recent report issued by the government, highlighted that the two biggest issues with today's home care system are excessive bureaucracy and a lack of accountability for system outcomes. This report and these issues must be addressed, and soon. Again, Mr. Speaker, we hope these will be addressed in tomorrow's budget.

Our fourth ask is a serious, credible and detailed plan to balance the budget by 2017-18. It's desperately needed. All we've heard on this subject to date are platitudes and numbers that don't add up. In fact, this government hasn't even been able to keep its own deficit numbers straight. Rather than reducing the deficit as they claim, the deficit has actually been rising, going from \$9.2 billion in the 2012-13 fiscal year to \$10.5 billion in

the 2013-14 fiscal year, to this year at \$10.9 billion. Dealing with the deficit has been done on a wing and a prayer, and if the province is to have a hope of turning its finances around, there needs to be a solid plan put in place immediately. Interest payments on the debt are beginning to crowd out critical front-line services like health care and education. Over the last number of weeks, we've seen 249 nurses laid off, 250 teaching positions lost in Toronto alone, and 118 teachers lost in Kawartha, to state just a few examples.

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Finally, we ask for a commitment to reduce electricity prices so that all people and businesses no longer have to be paying some of the highest energy costs in North America. Every time we turn around, hydro rates are going up. Just on Monday, we heard that rates will rise by 15% on May 1. The government's wasteful spending on the Green Energy Act and the awarding of FIT energy contracts are but two of the reasons that electricity prices are skyrocketing here in Ontario by more than \$1,100 a year for the average homeowner. This amount is without either Monday's announcement or the increases that will result from the privatization of a majority share of Hydro One. Clearly, real action needs to be taken, and needs to be taken now, to reduce electricity prices and bring back manufacturing and create jobs in this province.

In conclusion, as I said in March, this government needs to get its fiscal house in order—my colleagues say it every day—and we need to stop making the people of Ontario carry the burden for this overspending and lack of financial control. My caucus colleagues and I have presented five sensible solutions to assist this government. We'll be hoping and watching to see that they're in the budget tomorrow. I urge all members of this House to support our motion this afternoon.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Timmins—James Bay.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Mr. Speaker, I just want to say up front that we, as New Democrats, will not be supporting this motion, and I want to get into some of the reasons why.

Let me just start with essentially what the Tories are saying here. The Conservatives are suggesting essentially four actions that lead toward a balanced budget in 2017-18. I would argue that these things in themselves are not going to do the savings in order to balance the budget in 2017-18, but I'll give them some leeway on that.

The Conservatives are suggesting a number of things that, quite frankly, I am opposed to and my colleagues are opposed to for a number of reasons. Let me first of all get into what they're saying in point number 4. They say, "A commitment to reduce energy prices...." Nowhere in what they're saying today are they saying that they're opposed to the privatization of Hydro One.

I think that most people living in Ontario understand that privatization is going to raise rates in this province, and it's going to raise them in the same way we've seen by what the government did, which was started under the Conservatives with the deregulation and privatization on

the generation side, and what the Liberals have accelerated.

Let me just give you this—I know that members of this assembly mostly understand this, but I'm not so sure that the public understands this. Ontario, prior to the Mike Harris attempt to privatize and the Ernie Eves attempt to privatize the system, used to generate about 25,000 megawatts. Our total generation capacity was roughly 25,000 megawatts. At a time when the economy of Ontario was doing rather well, our demand was somewhere around 19,000 to 21,000 megawatts. Yes, there were some times that the demand went above that, but generally it was 19,000 to 21,000 megawatts.

The Conservatives first, followed by the Liberals who really accelerated this, signed private power deals with their friends in the private sector in order to build energy projects that generate electricity at a much higher cost than we see our public assets delivering energy. For example, from falling water at the Niagara Falls dams at Beck or on the Mattagami River, or wherever they might be, we're able to generate electricity for around 3.5 to 4 cents per kilowatt hour. If you look at our nuclear plants, they're able to generate electricity at about 5 to 6 cents per kilowatt hour. Our total capacity, between the nuclear side—what used to be the complete nuclear side, because we privatized Bruce—and the hydroelectric side, used to be somewhere around 15,000 to 16,000 megawatts. The government, by way of its privatization schemes under the Conservatives and by way of privatization under the Liberals, has increased the capacity of the system by 10,000 to 12,000 megawatts—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): I'm having trouble hearing the speaker. It's really loud on the opposition side. If you guys could keep it down a few decibels, I'd appreciate it. Thanks.

Go ahead.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Thank you, Speaker.

My point is that these private power deals they've signed have increased the capacity of our system by about 10,000 to 12,000 megawatts at a time when the demand went down. Everybody knows that you don't increase capacity in a system when your demand is going down. Yes, you refurbish what you have when it comes to your various hydro facilities, but you don't add capacity in the way that we did.

Currently we're using sometimes, on average, between 14,000 and 16,000 megawatts at any one time in our system, and our system is able to generate about 30,000 to 35,000 megawatts depending on what's running on that particular day. We are forced, by the signing of private power deals, to buy electricity from much more expensive producers when we could do it ourselves.

If you wonder why your hydro bill has gone through the roof, you can thank Michael Harris and you can thank Mr. Eves from the Conservative Party, you can thank Dalton McGuinty and you'll certainly be able to thank the Premier, Ms. Wynne, when it comes to what they're doing on the privatization side.

We are buying electricity that, first of all, we don't need because we have enough capacity in our public system. And what's worse is, we are locked into buying it whether we need it or not. So when Ontario needs 14,000 megawatts of power, we run the water through the dams by not running our generators, or we run our generators at our dams as motors. At our nuclear facilities, we're actually venting steam because we're not buying the nuclear power from them at times because we have to buy power at two, three and four times the cost from the private power deals that they've signed.

Now this government is trying to make us believe that privatizing Hydro One is going to lead to efficiencies and save us all kinds of money. Well, I've seen what the efficiencies have done to my hydro bill. People across this province have seen what that has done to their hydro bills. Privatization has led to higher hydro prices, industries have had to shut down, such as Xstrata in Timmins and many more across this province, and people can't afford it.

One of the concerns, I have to say, in this motion—and this is one of the key reasons I will not vote for this motion—is that they talk about a commitment to reduce energy prices. How are you going to do that? Are you prepared to cancel those private power deals that you guys are so fond of? Absolutely not.

Interjection: Yes.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Don't tell me yes, because I know what Conservatives stand for. Are you prepared to stand up and oppose the privatization of Hydro One for the reason that going to the private sector is going to save you more money? In this case, the Liberals have outflanked the Tories and are moving farther to the right when it comes to the issue of what they're doing on hydro.

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: In home care, they're talking about fixing the problems by streamlining the system. I remember what happened the last time they tried to streamline the system under the Conservative government of Mike Harris: We privatized a large part of our community care system when it came to providing services in the home. We're not spending less money because we privatized the system; we are spending more money because we privatized the system. Because they're limiting the amount of money that is able to be spent in the community care access system now, it means to say that we're rationing services to patients who need it in their homes and residents who need to be supported in their homes because we're spending a larger share of the public dollars of our health care system not on the patients but in the profit that the Conservatives set up by privatizing a large part of the community care access centres.

I will not vote for this motion because what the Conservatives are talking about is more of the same: more right-wing ideology, more privatization—something that is proven, time and time again, doesn't work.

Then they say that they're opposed to the carbon tax, as they call it. Let's all agree on one thing. There's a thing called global warming in this province. I'm going to argue that yes, this province has done a lot up to now when it comes to being able to deal with both emissions in the air and emissions in our water.

I look at Sudbury, Mr. Speaker—and I'm sure you've been there a number of times. If you went to Sudbury—

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): All right. The member from Renfrew might want to turn his chair around and he might want to get back in his seat if he wants to be loud. I'll be warning him next time.

Continue.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I say again, Mr. Speaker, that if you had taken the time 30 or 35 years ago to go to Sudbury, and you go there today, it is night and day. Sudbury is a much greener, much cleaner place than we saw 30 and 35 years ago.

You used to drive into Sudbury—the Americans, during the lunar landing of Apollo and during the Gemini program, were sending their astronauts to Sudbury in order to practise walking on the moon because Sudbury was so polluted that it looked like the face of the moon.

But today when you go to Sudbury it's a very different city. It's a city with trees. It's a city with greenery. It's a city that has very much revitalized itself when it comes to the environment. Why? Because governments over the years, of all stripes, understood that part of the responsibility we have is to have laws and regulations in this province that deal adequately with making sure we do all we can, given the technology we've got and the capacity we can bring to bear to make our planet greener and make our environment greener.

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The carbon tax—what do they call it again?

Interjection: Cap and trade.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: The cap-and-trade system, I will argue, is not the be-all and end-all that's going to resolve the entire issue of what goes on with our planet as far as what's going on with our environment. But the two points I want to make are, we've done a lot over the years to clean it up. The carbon—

Interjection: Cap and trade.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: The cap-and-trade system is a system that will allow us to put a carrot when it comes to having those industrial polluters do the right thing, which is invest in those technologies that are necessary to be able to green.

The last part I want to leave on—and I've just got two, three minutes—is the Ontario registered pension plan. The Conservatives are opposed to people who do not have pensions getting a defined pension plan. In this case, the ORPP is a very small step forward but a very important step forward. We, as New Democrats, through Andrea Horwath, our leader, and others, have advocated for a CPP-style system for a long time. We've argued that we should try to partner with the federal government in order to augment the Canada pension system, so that

workers, when they retire, are able to get a defined benefit when it comes to their retirement.

We know that if you're in an RRSP system, as we are here in the House—there's not a Conservative member who's going to tell me they'd rather be in an RRSP system versus a defined pension system. I think there's not a Conservative in the House, not a New Democrat in the House and not a Liberal in the House who would argue that an RRSP system is better than a defined pension system.

A defined pension is always the best way to go. The question is, how do you build that defined pension so that it's fully funded, that it has the ability to provide a good benefit, that it's secure and not so expensive that you're not able to pay for it?

Mr. Speaker, I must say that I've not only spoken against this particular motion, but I just want to say that I will be voting against it for the reasons put forward. What we have are the Conservatives who are ideologically saying the same thing. The only answer is to privatize and sell it, the same way that the Liberals have now adopted the Conservative position. It is funny to watch. We have Liberals who are outflanking the Conservatives on the right and now wrapping themselves in that same ideology, that same language, that the only thing you can do to build transit is to sell off hydro. I just say that \$4 billion that you're going to get for the sale, you've already spent it. You need almost \$30 billion to invest in infrastructure.

The province has, will continue and always did fund our capital infrastructure needs, when it comes to what needs to be done, by way of loans and other mechanisms. It's not like the province doesn't spend anything at all. Should we invest in these transit projects? Absolutely. Kitchener-Waterloo has been looking, and it's been a very big disappointment. Yesterday, they didn't get what they were supposed to get, and the same thing in Niagara.

There are ways of financing this that don't throw out the baby with the bathwater. That sell off of hydro for \$4 billion allows us not to raise the kind of dollars we need to invest in these systems and puts us in a situation where we lose control over a public asset, and everybody's hydro bill, yet again, goes through the roof.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Mississauga–Streetsville.

Mr. Bob Delaney: Speaker, two generations ago, in an iconic film of its era, there was an expression that the film's antagonists used when they felt they ought to get their way. They'd say of the other party, "Make him an offer he can't refuse." Now, the micromanagers in Prime Minister Harper's office, who dictate the memos that govern every thought, word and deed the Ontario PC Party uses, used parallel language when they ordered the Ontario PC Party to make the government an offer they couldn't accept.

Let's look at the five either false or patently silly premises of today's opposition day motion. It's Canadian and Ontario Conservatives who continue to strive to make 99% of Canadians the economic servants of the

richest 1%. There is no more certain way to keep ordinary Canadians snapping at one another while they fight over the table scraps of the wealthy than to deny working families any hope at all of a secure retirement after a long working life.

Your pensions and your savings, when the Canada Pension Plan was first introduced, used to have to last between a few years and perhaps a decade following retirement. Now it's double or triple that time, even as the value of the half-century-old Canada Pension Plan has failed to keep pace with the times. The responsible thing for the party opposite to have introduced in this opposition day motion would have been to petition the federal government to simply adopt the proposed Ontario Retirement Pension Plan and to enhance the Canada Pension Plan, to make the Ontario Retirement Pension Plan the law all across the country and to make the Canada Pension Plan truly a useful tool. But they didn't do that. Will this government abandon young and working families to golden years that the neo-cons would turn to lead? Absolutely not.

Other than ideologically driven Conservatives, the rest of the world fully accepts that climate change is bringing ruin to every region of this planet and is going to lead to the extinction of some of our world's signature species. One such species are Canadian polar bears, who increasingly drown while searching for food, see their cubs starve or resort to cannibalism. Ontario will join other responsible jurisdictions and put a price on polluting carbon emissions. This province rejects the PC Party proposal to neglect our environment.

Ontario PCs have had an opportunity to support the most comprehensive and wide-ranging program of reforms and funding to long-term care that Ontario has ever seen. Conservatives have consistently stalled legislation to benefit seniors with repetitive and lengthy debate in this Legislature. They have robotically voted against the very legislation that seniors need, and they have urged budget cuts that would strip Ontario seniors of care. This government rejects the Conservative ideology of telling seniors that they are on their own in their declining years, and we reject this PC Party proposal.

No governing party in North American history did a worse job of messing up a strong electricity generation and transmission system than did the Ontario Conservatives. For the benefit of the viewing audience, here are the four pillars of Conservative energy policy:

(1) Do nothing. Run your generation and transmission system into the ground by spending nothing on the upkeep and expansion of your power plants and your transmission lines.

(2) Burn coal. It is truly quick and dirty, never mind the health of the people in Ontario cities, and our air quality be damned.

(3) Buy expensive power from the United States generated, ironically, from burning fossil fuels, and stick the electricity ratepayer with the environmental health cost. That, by the way, is how you got your stranded debt.

(4) When all else fails, and it always fails, just blame everybody else.

Ontario saw that story for eight long, lost years. We're not going back there and we reject this proposal outright. And by the way, Ontario power prices are competitive right now. Ontario is completing expensive power production and transmission renewal that most other jurisdictions have not yet even started.

Finally, no government in Canada boasts Ontario's track record of success in always beating its deficit reduction targets: not the feds, not Alberta and not any other province. No Conservative government produced three consecutive budget surpluses, as this government did in 2006, 2007 and 2008. The serious, credible plan to balance Ontario's budget was laid out fully in the 2009-10 Ontario budget. It has worked. It is on schedule to achieve a balanced Ontario budget within three years.

There is not one point in today's opposition day motion that either merits support or is rooted in fact. This government will vote against it.

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

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Speaker, our deficit three years ago was a whopping \$9.2 billion. Instead of reining spending in, spending within our means, it grew to \$10.5 billion. If that wasn't enough of a wake-up call, the government continued spending and it went to \$10.9 billion. Now we've heard from Moody's, who downgraded us, Fitch, who downgraded us, and others who have given us a downgrade and moved us from "stable" to "negative." The Conference Board of Canada, the Ontario Chamber of Commerce, the Canadian federation of business—all have weighed in, telling the province to drastically change their pattern.

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The Auditor General said it best. She said, in her annual report in December, that if you don't dramatically change the path that you're on, you'll begin to crowd out the core services that Ontarians rely on. And that is exactly what's happening in Ontario. Everything she said would happen is happening. I have stood in this Legislature and talked about the fact that in my hometown of North Bay, 94 full-time front-line health care workers, including 54 nurses, were fired this year—full-time; plus, 34 part-time were fired at our hospital. Forty-three workers at Ontario Northland—fired. Fifty-four workers at Nipissing University, including 22 professors—all fired because this government can't balance their budget.

So our interim leader, Jim Wilson, has put forth five solid, credible ideas to help us move Ontario forward. We talked about the Ontario registered pension plan. Again, Speaker, all of the bodies that I mentioned have spoken negatively about the proposed pension tax. In fact, the government's own Ministry of Finance documents tell us that this will cost us 18,000 jobs minimum, and up to 54,000 jobs—18,000 for every \$2 billion taken out of the system. This is horrendous. I don't know what you have to do to shake these guys, to say, "You're costing up jobs at every single turn. Every time you think

you're helping us, you cost us jobs." Here's some advice: Stop helping. Thank you. Just stop helping.

The cap-and-trade tax is an interesting one. Again, their own document, cabinet advice—"confidential advice to cabinet" is actually what it's called—tells them, "Do this and it costs you 5,000 jobs right off the bat. That's what it's going to cost." The price of gasoline and the price of everything go up. It's a tax on everything. Does something need to be done? Yes, but the method that they're doing it has nothing—nothing whatsoever—to do with addressing climate change or addressing emissions. It's all about ringing in some cash—ringing in more cash from the public so they can attempt to balance their budget. It's the only way they can.

The budget is going the wrong way: \$9.2 billion, 10.5 billion, \$10.9 billion; they're in the cellar. They're in the cellar, Speaker. So they're going about that the wrong way. What they're going to be doing is taking the temperature, let's call it, of a company on the level of their emissions, putting a cap on that, and then if that company goes over, what happens, of course, is that they have to go out and buy. So they can go to California to a company that has lowered their emissions there and can buy credits from there. It's all about money. It's all about money.

In fact, here's how it limits companies in Ontario: A company that's producing X amount of emissions—why would they ever want to expand and grow their business? They'll be creating more emissions along with those jobs. Why would they ever expand in Ontario? They won't be expanding here ever again—something that has happened in the past.

We had 2,700 fewer businesses in Ontario last year than the year before. You'd think that would shake you up and tell you, "Holy crackers, something is wrong with the way we're doing things." You would think that's what this Liberal government would say. But no, it's, "Damn the torpedoes. Full steam ahead." That's what they do: tax and spend, tax and spend.

Speaker, the third plan was to talk about fixing home care by streamlining the system to reduce the number of agencies that patients must deal with, and by tying the CCAC—community care access centre—funding so that all the people and businesses no longer have to be involved in the long wait times that we have. That's the problem that we have. So we put a credible plan forward.

The fourth was our energy costs. We have the highest energy rates in North America to go along with the pension tax, where we already have the highest payroll taxes in Canada. I have no idea how the government continues to say, "Our hydro rates are normal. Our hydro rates are fine. Our hydro rates are average." I just don't understand how they can get away with saying that when we have the highest energy rates in all of North America, period.

Just yesterday or the day before, the government announced, the OEB announced, that hydro rates for peak times are going up 15%. Speaker, that's one day—a 15% increase. Our rates have already tripled. With the next rate increase, our rates will have quadrupled since the

day this government took office. That's why we've lost 300,000 people who used to work in manufacturing. They're gone. They're gone, Speaker. Nobody on that side seems to care—a 15% increase.

All three parties, when we toured on the pre-budget consultations, heard from Jennifer in Ottawa. She told us, "I have to shut my power off from 6 in the morning to noon every day and again from 3 in the afternoon to 7 every night," just so she could pay her bills. She had to choose—

Ms. Catherine Fife: That's right.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: That's Jennifer. Do you remember Jennifer? She has to choose between heat or eat; between food or fuel. That's the Ontario that the Liberals have created.

We're asking them in our last ask to present to us a serious, credible and detailed plan to balance the budget by 2017-18.

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

Mr. Wayne Gates: I'm certainly pleased to rise this afternoon. I want to talk to my PC colleagues, who are calling for a commitment to reduce energy prices so that all people and businesses no longer have to be paying some of the highest energy costs in North America. If the PCs want to do this, then they must also be against the sell-off of Ontario's hydro assets.

The first of these sell-offs began under the Mike Harris government. Since then, hydro rates have gone up 300%. Our small businesses and our manufacturers in our constituency in Niagara Falls cannot accept higher hydro rates. We must make sure that hydro is not privatized and the rates do not increase. We support manufacturers, we support businesses, and we'll continue to fight against high hydro rates. So remember this: Selling off hydro may balance your budget in the short term, but once those assets are gone, they are gone forever—gone forever.

I just got this, Mr. Speaker. The Welland Tribune today: hydro rates hurt Niagara businesses. The Blue Star Restaurant—and I'm sure that some of my colleague Liberals and PCs have been to beautiful Welland and been to the Blue Star. It has been in business for 60 years. Do you know what they're paying for hydro per month in a small business? It's \$4,000 a month. Can you imagine what will happen to that rate if it's privatized? The government on the other side is not saying, "Hydro rates are going to go down if we privatize." They won't make that commitment.

Here are other ones struggling to stay open: Brunner Manufacturing, a small manufacturer that does brake parts in Niagara Falls with 70 employees. It has been in the community for almost 30 years, owned by one person, Peter Brunner. He's saying that they're struggling to stay open and maybe threatening 70 jobs because of hydro rates.

Rodeway Inn in Niagara Falls: It's a huge hit to their bottom line.

Privatizing hydro: The message should be clear that once you privatize it, we no longer own it. The residents of Ontario no longer own it. We lose it forever, and it's a mistake. The PCs should know it as well as the Liberals.

1630

Today the Liberals said that there will be no cuts to education and that there will be none in the budget. If this is the case—and I'm glad the education minister is here—what happened at Parliament Oak, where the residents had to fight to keep their school open; a community hub, the very fabric of that little community? They're closing the school. Think about it: 88 other schools have been closed since 2011. The PCs are calling for a balanced budget in 2017-18. Right now, the budget deficit is to the tune of 10 billion—that's with a B—dollars. The Auditor General reported—

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: That's not us.

Mr. Wayne Gates: It's going to come to you. I'll give you a second here.

The Auditor General reported that P3s have cost this province \$8 billion more than if those services had been given to public institutions. Think about this, because my colleagues over here support P3s. And what I'm saying is, if you want to have a balanced budget, let's take a look at P3s. Take a look at the hospitals, because we're going to build a hospital in Niagara Falls. We're going to build a hospital—

Interjections.

Mr. Wayne Gates: It would be interesting if they just listened instead of talked, because it's important to listen to this.

The hospital built in Peterborough that was publicly funded and publicly delivered cost \$350 million. The same type of hospital built in St. Catharines, with the same number of beds and around the same square footage, cost \$1 billion. So why don't we build it, publicly fund it and publicly deliver it? We can build it in Niagara Falls, have local workers, local engineers and local small businesses putting people back to work. Take that \$650 million that we're going to waste on a P3 and put it right back into front-line health care so we don't have to close hospitals in Niagara-on-the-Lake, in Fort Erie and in Welland. That's what we should be doing with P3s.

I'm glad the Minister of Transportation is here, because what we need in this budget is GO trains all the way to Niagara Falls. It is a game-changer.

Interjections.

Mr. Wayne Gates: Please.

This is a game-changer for Niagara Falls. The transportation minister is here today. His Premier—and I want my colleagues in the Conservative Party to listen to this. The Premier came into my riding during the election and said this—and it was only a few months ago: "GO to Niagara is a high, high priority." Now, think about that: "GO to Niagara is a high, high priority."

Then you take a look at what my good colleague from St. Catharines says. He says that he'd see it in 2015. So I'm saying, in the budget that's coming tomorrow, let's not forget about Niagara. It's a beautiful part of the prov-

ince of Ontario; you have an obligation to get GO down there. Let's get it done.

I've only got 30 seconds left. The other thing that I wanted to make sure is talked about in the budget is that we have to make sure that we protect the auto sector, protect the footprint that's going to run out in 2016, so we'll continue to have good-paying auto jobs, just like they do in every other country in the world. Every other country in the world protects their auto industry, whether it's Mexico, whether it's France, whether it's Italy. This government has an obligation to make sure that the plant in Oshawa, the plant in St. Catharines, the plants in Windsor and all over Ontario stay open.

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

Mr. Peter Z. Milczyn: I'd like to be able to say that I'm pleased to rise in the House this afternoon—I'm always happy to be in the House but I can't say that I'm pleased to have to respond to the opposition members' motion. It puts forward a series of proposals seemingly designed to assist in getting a better budget for the people of Ontario, but most of the points actually have nothing to do with the budget that's going to be presented tomorrow, nor would they in any way assist us in this government's path to balancing the budget in 2017-18.

Now, the opposition does call on us to put forward a serious, credible, detailed plan to balance the budget by 2017-18, and we will do that. Minister Sousa will do that when he rises in the House tomorrow. This government is on track to reducing the deficit and achieving a balanced budget. We've met or exceeded all of our deficit projections over the last number of years, and prior to the global recession, this government was delivering surplus after surplus after surplus. This government knows how to do that, and we will again.

But the balance of the opposition motion really—I understand that their role is to question, to challenge, to criticize. And that's fair enough; that's their job. But a little less than a year ago there was an election in this province, and one of the ballot questions on that election was, "Do Ontarians want to have stable, predictable, good retirement income by way of an Ontario registered pension plan?" That was a valid question, Mr. Speaker, and the people of Ontario spoke clearly. So less than a year later, for the opposition to say, "Throw that out" really is not a credible position, I think, for them to even be putting forward.

If they have suggestions on how to do it better, fair enough; but as one of the members from the third party mentioned, the members of the official opposition know full well what it means not to have good pensions. They themselves eliminated a gold-plated pension plan, albeit for MPPs, but they replaced it with something that each and every one of them privately says is inadequate and they're not happy about. Really, they should be working with us, for the benefit of all Ontarians, to ensure that every Ontarian would be guaranteed good, decent retirement income.

Mr. Speaker, the Conservatives have an ideological approach to this. They say everybody is on their own, everybody can take care of themselves. That's why we have over \$600 billion of unused RRSP contribution room in this country—over \$600 billion of savings that Canadians, some by choice, but most from necessity, could not achieve. Those people—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from James Bay and the member from Welland, could you keep it down a bit? Thanks.

Mr. Peter Z. Milczyn: Mr. Speaker, those people—not the wealthy 1% that most Conservative plans really speak to, but the majority of working Ontarians—will not be able to achieve that good level of retirement savings. That is why this is very important to bring forward.

I would have hoped that our friends across the aisle here would have spoken to their federal cousins and said, "Use that EI room, which was going to be created, to supplement the CPP." But of course, they chose not to.

I'm perplexed, because just a little over a week ago, we had a debate here about climate change, and today we're hearing, "Don't implement cap-and-trade carbon pricing"—which will be a North American-wide market in the coming years. "Don't do that. Don't do anything." Yet on March 12, the member from Simcoe-Grey said in this House, "We believe they should be taking measures to actually reduce greenhouse emissions." Well, what are they? On this side of the House, we have a plan. The PC environment critic from Huron-Bruce, also on March 12, said, "Climate change is too important of an issue and we cannot play games with it." Yet today, we have an opposition motion that simply says do nothing.

On the environment, it's also crucial that we act now. The federal government recently sent a letter to the province: "Please tell us what you're doing"—because they're doing nothing—"because we need that data to show that somebody is actually doing something in this country." So we're going to do that, of course.

Whether it's fixing home care—which they purport to want to do, but in fact, they wanted to cut 100,000 jobs. Many of those would have been front-line health care workers.

On the energy file, when they've made a mess of the hydro sector in this province, they have no plan to offer in exchange. We've done things to try to sustain that hydro system by making investments in the infrastructure, which they allowed to fall apart. That costs money, and that's part of a sound fiscal plan for this province.

On this side of the House, for those and many other reasons, we reject the opposition motion. It makes no sense, offers no advice on how to sustain a balanced budget, and we will not be voting for it.

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

Mrs. Julia Munro: It is with recognition and respect for the public trust that I enter into today's debate. Our caucus has chosen to focus on five asks for this year's budget. We have chosen these topics as ones that we

believe will have a potentially devastating impact on all Ontarians, if implemented. They must be withdrawn. My remarks will be devoted to the proposed Ontario Retirement Pension Plan.

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From the introduction of this pension scheme, we have raised issues. First, the government hasn't provided a plan. Questions abound, but with no answers. Employers have told the government that the mandatory financial contributions will cost jobs, and we know that jobless people can't pay into or collect a pension. Employers and employees alike will have less money in their pockets, reducing their purchasing power now.

People want choice in their spending priorities and their saving methods. The ORPP robs Ontarians of that choice. It is clear to those who understand what's at stake that this pension scheme must be abandoned.

Instead, next week, we will have third reading of Bill 56, the ORPP bill, amid uncertainty. Let me explain. There is no clear definition of who is in or who is out of the plan. How many years will individuals be required to make contributions in order to receive benefits? For those who see this as an opportunity for a pension, there is also uncertainty—no idea how their money will be handled and how investment returns will be generated. We don't even know whether this ORPP is a Ponzi scheme, fraught with intergenerational inequity, whereby younger participants are paying for the older, soon-to-be-retired.

The lack of a plan has created further uncertainty, as there is no definition of "comparable" workplace pension plan. What will be the impact on existing private sector pensions? Hundreds of thousands of people employed in Ontario have workplace pension plans that, together, amount to trillions in assets.

In 12 hours of public hearings, we heard 41 speakers. It was clear that the majority who spoke were opposed for a number of reasons. One concern raised is that, without exemptions, the ORPP may crowd out or eliminate existing pension plans and retirement savings plans. For many people, this may mean that the ORPP provides no net increase to savings, or it may even reduce their retirement assets. Without a plan, it is impossible to evaluate; only speculate.

Another aspect is that the 1.9% contribution, provided by both the employee and the employer, is tax-exempt. Without a plan, we don't even know if the government has contemplated the impact on its revenues. How much is the government losing in tax revenue by this approach? We don't know about administration costs. How much will it cost to provide a stand-alone pension scheme: \$300 million, \$400 million? With no plan in place, it's back to speculation.

But there is a clue in last year's budget, on page 20 of the introduction: "By unlocking value from its assets and encouraging more Ontarians to save through a proposed new" pension plan, "new pools of capital would be available for Ontario-based projects such as building roads, bridges and new transit. Our strong alternative financing

and procurement model, run by Infrastructure Ontario, will allow for the efficient deployment of this capital...."

But this too leaves much open to uncertainty. "Efficient deployment of this capital" doesn't sound like a solid foundation for a pension plan; it sounds more like a building fund. There is a difference. With a properly tendered public-private partnership, infrastructure investment is carried by the private sector to build, and there is no evidence to illustrate the mechanism by which this process would provide the stream of income necessary for a pension.

My remarks today reflect the genuine concern that I and my caucus colleagues share about this proposal and its effect on the well-being of Ontarians. We know, through public discourse, businesses from around the province, and even the Ministry of Finance document, that this proposal is a job-killer.

Small businesses especially have been assaulted by this government by increased red tape and matching increased fees. They don't have any financial cushions to absorb this proposal. Instead, they see a government bent on squeezing more money from them through increased hydro rates, a mandatory pension contribution and a carbon tax, to name a few. Businesses can only pay these when they make a profit. More and more these days, businesses are unable to make a profit. They close their shop or move away.

I remind the Premier that the jobless rate has been the worst in this country for the last six years. The last thing Ontarians need is a plan to kill jobs.

Premier, unemployed people and people who will have to shutter their businesses are the people whose lives will be drastically affected by your pension scheme. We ask you to reconsider before it's too late. We ask you directly to withdraw your proposed Ontario Retirement Pension Plan.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Kitchener–Waterloo.

Ms. Catherine Fife: I'm pleased to stand in the House on behalf of the people of Kitchener–Waterloo, but also to talk about this upcoming budget. It has been said by many politicians from many other parties that budgets tell the story of our priorities, because when you follow the money, you follow the priorities of government. In this government you also have to follow where the people are going and who's getting appointed, but that's another story.

The motion that has been brought forward by the PC caucus has—I think we can come from a position of empathy with the PC caucus. I mean, they're frustrated. They're absolutely frustrated. We are as equally frustrated as the PC caucus with the Liberal government and their fiscal plans. But there are certainly a number of issues, actually, that need to be addressed, that this motion sort of skirts around.

It's interesting, Mr. Speaker: I was just speaking to a candidate in the Alberta election. I reached out. We're doing some mentorship, province to province. There is a very exciting election, obviously, happening in Alberta

right now. I was speaking to Emily Shannon. She said that she is in a very Conservative riding, but people are listening. And boy, when people listen, good things happen. When they pay attention, good things happen.

She said, "I think they all agree that we all need to get to B from A"—so things need to be better around the economy, around the environment, around child care and health care—"but the difference is that we don't always agree on how to get to B." I think that this motion actually speaks volumes in that regard.

Mr. Wilson has moved this motion and he's looking for certain aspects to be engaged in this budget. I mean, there's no way on God's green earth that any of these motions are going to be reflected in this Liberal budget. Based on their participation and based on the looks across the aisle, I think we all know that those are not going to be contained there.

The good news, though, of course, is that the Liberals have given us lots to work against. There was this saying when I was on the school board: "An enraged electorate is an engaged electorate." I can tell you one thing: The Hydro One privatization is mobilizing people who have never been politically engaged. So congratulations, you've made the people of this province so angry that they're getting off the couch and they're going to get engaged in the political process. Some of them are even watching and tweeting about it and paying attention. We want them to be paying attention to your plan to sell off Hydro One, to burn the furniture to heat the house. I mean, it is as regressive as you get.

Mr. John Vanthof: Kathleen Wynne: Mike Harris, the sequel.

Ms. Catherine Fife: Not even Mike Harris and Ernie Eves—

Interjections.

Ms. Catherine Fife:—call on the government. It's an exciting day, budget day.

We had this sort of pseudo-lockup last Thursday for this banker's report. I don't understand it. I mean, you put the finance critic for the PCs and myself in a dark, dingy room with a little Liberal babysitter. The irony, of course, is that the lights didn't really work in the room; of course, we're selling off Hydro One, so it seemed a little foreshadowing to me. While we came out of that dark room, the hope genuinely is that this government will see the light on Hydro One privatization. It is not a plan that will be serving the people of this province right now, or future generations.

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The good news, though, is that there are solutions. I came into this Legislature during the minority government when people did have to listen to each other and there was some give and take, and at those committees there was a genuine effort to participate in a process that perhaps could make legislation stronger. Those days are no longer here. It is a different sort of reality here at Queen's Park. I must tell you, I'm not so happy about that, but here we are.

It's really interesting to watch the question period process—right, Mr. Speaker?—because on education, for instance—

Ms. Cindy Forster: Look who the Speaker is.

Ms. Catherine Fife: I know. It's shocking to see the member from Simcoe in the Speaker's chair, although he looks very happy right now.

On the education front, there's no doubt about it: Last year's budget had 6% cuts in every ministry except for health, education, post-secondary training, community and social services, and justice, even though since then we've seen that it doesn't really matter. Those promises—it's not even worth the paper you printed it on, because you found backroom doorways to actually cut those things that you said you weren't going to cut. And 6%: That is an austerity budget, pure and simple, Mr. Speaker.

Tomorrow, we fully expect to see additional cuts, even more short-sighted perhaps than last year's. We should be learning through this process, because those cuts have been playing out in all of our communities across the province of Ontario, and yet, to see the Minister of Health and the Minister of Education get up and say, "Well, these cuts aren't happening"—there are people here today in this House who have actually lost their job.

Ms. Cindy Forster: "There are no nurses being laid off."

Ms. Catherine Fife: No. These are real people. These are real cuts. These are real jobs that have been reduced in communities from the north to the east to the west. There are obviously some politics at play here, but if you look at hospitals, the reductions are profound because this is the third year in a row that those budgets have been flat-lined, and that means a cut, a cut, a cut.

Even more alarming, Mr. Speaker, is that a huge amount of contracting out and privatizing of those services have compromised the quality of public services, but they have also cost us more. So when you look at the public accounts, for instance, which are actually the most accurate numbers that I can find in this place—as I've said, the budget was not altogether accurate—you can see that when you privatized the IT services, for instance, for public services, government services, there has been a 63% increase in cost and a reduction in service, and that does not serve the people of this province. That is not a fiscally responsible decision to take on.

So follow the money. See where the money is going, because it's not going to front-line services, and we've seen this. Bill 8 was supposed to improve transparency and accountability, and yet year after year after year we see these public sector CEO salaries continue to balloon. It is beyond insulting, the amount of money that people are getting in the public sector. I think we will have to have a debate in this Legislature at some point about what it means to actually serve the public, because university presidents should not be making a million dollars, Mr. Speaker. There is no justification. You cannot rationalize it. It should not be allowed through the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities. There

should be a hard cap. You have to have a hard cap on those salaries, because what's reasonable to a Liberal or what's reasonable to a Conservative most likely will not be reasonable to a New Democrat, because those numbers are too big. It speaks to the priorities, I think.

We would love to see an honest discussion about what is happening in the education file, because to see the Minister of Education get up and say, "These cuts are not happening, and we've invested these billions of dollars," you know what the important piece that's missing from the education discourse in this province is? The government can say they put some additional money in, but that went to new initiatives. Rozanski, back in 2002-03, identified \$2 billion which was removed by the PC caucus—this is, like, 14 years ago, 13 years ago. That money has never been replaced to the core funding of public education, because you directed the new funding to new initiatives. So you can't say that you've increased core funding. It went to your political interests. Now, on full-day kindergarten, that was also one of our interests, and I would never speak out against investing early in children. But the problem was that the Liberal government didn't follow their own advice, which Charles Pascal recommended, with our best future in mind, and that was to create community hubs. But you succumbed to the pressure that was out there around changing the status quo of what schools should be doing and what should happen in education, and you backed off that plan, which really was such a waste of energy. It just created more conflict between child care and education.

Now, it did in Ottawa, and in Waterloo, I'm very proud to say, we actually followed through on the initial report that Charles Pascal made, the recommendations he made to the government. At no cost to the taxpayer, because it's a not-for-profit model and because there's a wraparound model of care, we created almost 2,000 child care spaces in Waterloo region at no cost to the taxpayer. That's the kind of creative, innovative idea that this government should be pursuing, not selling off a public asset at \$4 billion. There is a \$100-billion backlog on the infrastructure file in this province alone. You guys drop \$4 billion on the way to work. It's absolutely ridiculous.

What we're looking for is really progressive ideas around where the money is going and where people in this province are going to get for investment.

Interjections.

Ms. Catherine Fife: I can see that the Liberals are very amused by my comments. But right now they're really focused on beer. They want you to look at beer. They want you to get focused on six-packs; maybe a couple of 12-packs in 10 stores. But the real story in this province right now is how desperate this government is for revenue. They're desperate because of their own mismanagement. They created this crisis, just like the former education minister, Mr. Snobelen. Do you remember: "We're going to create a crisis in education." This government has created a crisis in the economy of this province and in the fiscal management of this province, and

now they have created a reason to finally succumb to Bay Street.

Ms. Cindy Forster: That's how you got elected.

Ms. Catherine Fife: They did create a crisis. Remember Bill 115? Some of you—I know the back row weren't here. I don't think some of the back row people were here. But yes, there was a seat. It was between a minority and a majority government, and the government wanted to look like they knew what they were doing on the financial side of the books. Then they created this one seat, and you know what? Then they brought in Bill 115. Ironically, they brought in Bill 115, they squashed collective bargaining rights, they joined with the PC caucus, and people were enraged. This was never supposed to happen; this was not a progressive move.

Then they brought in Bill 122, you'll remember, Mr. Speaker. Bill 122 was a piece of legislation to say, essentially, that you're never going to be that mean to the education sector again. There's a little loophole in there, actually, that the minister can override at her discretion. I suspect that loophole to be pulled out pretty soon, I would think, because there are seven boards at the secondary school level in this province and they do not find 38 students in their classes to be acceptable on any level. As I have already pointed out, the additional funding went to new initiatives that the Liberals brought in. This funding never went to the gap in funding that Rozanski originally identified, which was \$2 billion. It just didn't. That's what I have to say about education.

Ms. Cindy Forster: What about the OPP?

Ms. Catherine Fife: I'm going to get to that.

Of course, if you talk about the economy, you cannot talk about the economy without addressing the energy issue in this province, and that the Ontario Energy Board has been sort of lifted up as this, "Don't worry. The OEB is going to take care of rates."

I watched the scrum with Mr. Clark, and he was very clear when he was asked, "Are rates going to go up?" "We don't think so." That instills a lot of confidence: "We don't think so." The Premier said as well, "We hope not. We hope that it doesn't go up." You can't blame Ontarians for having very serious trust issues with this government, given the track record.

Anyway, the 15% increase, and then the government has said, "It's going to be the OEB. They're going to have control—they always have—of these rates, and we're going to strengthen the OEB." But if you go back to what the Auditor General said about the Ontario Energy Board, it's a scathing report about the OEB and how many issues are at this board. They say that the cost of service review did not take into account all information and practices that could affect consumer rates—red flag. Then she goes on to say the settlement proposals are not reviewed from a public interest perspective, i.e., gas plants. She says that rate designs could disadvantage some customers, those who live in poverty—

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Ms. Cindy Forster: Or in the north.

Ms. Catherine Fife: —or in the north, or the east, or the west.

There's an additional review needed for accuracy and validity of information submitted to the board.

Improvements are needed in addressing consumer complaints. The Ombudsman also raised this. Of course, the Ombudsman is not going to have oversight over the new hydro. It's a very sought-after job. Of course, everybody is looking for a job in Ontario these days. They want that beer ombudsman job. It's definitely a highly sought-after job. It was all over Twitter, actually, when that first story broke out. The Ombudsman is not going to have oversight over this important file around energy.

Then we have this transit issue. The Conservatives are calling for a serious, credible and detailed plan to balance the budget by 2017-18. Well, there are so many knowledgeable stakeholders—chambers of commerce, municipalities, Better Business Bureaus, universities. They've come together in Kitchener-Waterloo, my community, and they've gathered the research and the evidence to make the case for two-way, all-day GO to Kitchener-Waterloo. This promise is like Groundhog Day. Just before the election, the Minister of Transportation and the Premier went all the way around Waterloo region and promised two-way, all-day, 30-minute service. The former Minister of Transportation even offered us a bullet train. I love that. I love that he said, "We can get a bullet train going along the Windsor-Toronto corridor for \$500 million." I guess some people bought it. But on Friday, when they made their last announcement, of course, Waterloo region was left out of that equation. The whole idea of two-way, all-day means that people from Toronto can also get to Kitchener-Waterloo. So now we're waiting 10 years—a 10-year wait on top of a five-year wait makes us a priority community. Do you know what? I just hope that the people of Kitchener-Waterloo don't buy what you're selling next time around. I'll be here to remind them about the broken promises. It's disgraceful for a Minister of Transportation to stand up and say to the community that generates hundreds of millions of dollars—that's the key piece. That's the economic development piece. In Kitchener-Waterloo, amazing things are happening: the commercialization of research, the innovation, the research, the advanced manufacturing. Google is there, and Desire2Learn. Good things are happening in Kitchener-Waterloo, but people need to get there, and they also need to get home, and they live here in Toronto. The municipalities of Kitchener and Waterloo made a proposal. It was delivered to the cabinet. The cabinet said, "This is amazing. This is worthwhile investing in." That was before the election. On Friday, we found out that we're now a priority by waiting an additional 10 years.

We're obviously concerned about transit. As the Auditor General points out, the more we delay these decisions and investments—the longer that the economic investment will pay off. Then, because the government is not generating that revenue, which they're so desperate for, they, in turn, will not have the money to invest in

education and health care. Those are the core values which people in this province have said they really value.

So what we're going to be looking at in this budget—the public-private partnerships. You can't ignore the AG's report altogether; you can't just dismiss it out of hand. Even if you don't take the \$8.2 billion, the \$6.5 billion in financing and legal and consulting costs that were above and beyond what a traditional procurement process—you can't ignore that. Governments can borrow money as low as 3%. It's not like you can leave the province, because you're the government. They know that you're not going to skip town. Although, I'm sure some people, on some days, may want to.

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: Well, look at the OPP. Ask them.

Ms. Cindy Forster: Some people have. Some people have skipped town.

Ms. Catherine Fife: Yes, Dalton got out of here pretty quickly.

You have to have a second look at that. You have to take a second look at the way infrastructure is procured in this province, because it is not sustainable. The Auditor General brought this report. It should not be dismissed out of hand.

What we're going to be looking for is some changes to infrastructure funding. We want the corporate tax giveaways rolled back. We want you to put people first. We want you to prioritize them first. We want you to close the HST loopholes. This is a huge revenue for this province, and it's going to be a lost opportunity. We'll be looking for these significant changes in this budget process. We're wondering where the budget line will be for the four OPP investigations, because you can't tell me—

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: It's got to be more than that by now.

Ms. Catherine Fife: No, there are only four. It is historic.

There is a cost, though, to scandal and there is a cost to waste. The people of this province are bearing the brunt of it.

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

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: I'm pleased to join the debate today on the PC Party's opposition day motion, specifically regarding carbon tax. Last March, I requested that this Liberal government not adopt a carbon tax. The announcement of the cap-and-trade program does not change this. It's just a tax by a different name.

Last Monday, when this cap-and-trade scheme was announced, even the Premier admitted it would be a tax. This tax will increase the cost of living and raising a family. It will also increase the cost of doing business here in Ontario. It is an irresponsible tax that Ontarians cannot afford.

This tax was introduced for no other reason but to fund a cash-strapped, mismanaged Liberal government on the backs of Ontarians, and it's unacceptable. Ontario already is in a dire economic state. This government has a nearly \$11-billion deficit that has increased for a third

straight year, up from \$10.5 billion last year to \$10.9 billion. By 2017-18, Ontario's net debt will have reached \$325 billion, nearly \$23,000 for every Ontarian.

Instead of taking responsible steps to balance their budget, the Liberals are instead trying to find new sources of revenue, which means taxing Ontarians in any possible way. This budget is all about gouging Ontarians. Cap-and-trade, the sale of Hydro One, changes to how beer is sold, ORPP, these are all initiatives that have one thing in common: an increase in costs for Ontarians. Again, I repeat: Ontario families and businesses simply cannot afford another tax to fund Liberal mismanagement.

Now, let's talk about the carbon tax, the cap-and-trade scheme that they've talked about. According to Stats Canada, Ontario has only contributed half a percentage point towards global greenhouse gas emissions, making Ontario very much a marginal producer of carbon emissions compared to many developing states around the world. The result of a carbon tax or a cap-and-trade, whether it decreases emissions or not, will undoubtedly be rising costs to consumers across the marketplace. The costs of heating or cooling a home will increase, while companies in energy-intensive fields will have increased costs that will be passed on to consumers, or they may very well just choose to leave Ontario, causing consumers to lose their jobs.

We already pay some of the highest energy rates in North America. We saw, just this week, that hydro rates will be going up yet again under this Liberal government by 14%. A further increase, by the way of a tax on carbon, may drive families into a heat-or-eat scenario. This Liberal cap-and-trade or pay-to-pollute scheme isn't a plan to reduce emissions, but rather it's a plan to take money from taxpayers to fund government initiatives.

Speaker, I've said it before and I'll say it again: Based on history, I have absolutely zero trust that this government can implement this type of system properly. It'll be just like the health tax implemented previously. It's called a health tax, but this revenue doesn't even go into the health sector. Instead, the health tax, one of the largest tax hikes in Ontario history, goes into general revenue—general revenue that is the Liberals' slush fund to pay for their billion-dollar scandals, such as gas plants and eHealth. The list can go on. All the while, front-line health care continues to be cut.

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I was speaking with OPSEU representatives today and I heard that the equipment is there to do a lot of procedures, but in many cases, they cut the procedure because the hospitals can't afford the man-hours to run the equipment. I share that with you because last Monday, a week ago this past Monday, my sister-in-law broke her leg below the knee in two places. She is only being operated on today to get a rod inserted. It's absolutely abysmal what this Liberal government has done to our health care.

You know what? I would dare reflect on a comment made by the former Premier and also the former energy minister, when they professed that the gas plant cancella-

tion would cost a mere \$40 million. Sadly, we learned that they misled us when the figure was actually \$1.1 billion. As I said before, I do not trust this government to get it right.

Even if gas increases by three cents, like the government claims it will, that will cost Ontarians another \$700 million a year. That's an additional \$100 per driver per year on top of everything else. It's not just gas that will increase, but groceries, clothing and heating. As I said before, this is a tax on everything.

It's not the first time that the Liberals have copied a European energy plan before they saw the evidence. The Liberal Green Energy Act was going to save the environment, reduce pollution and create jobs. Instead, it caused energy prices to skyrocket, devastated communities, made Liberal friends rich and drove jobs out of this province. The Green Energy Act is a disaster, and this cap-and-trade tax is setting up to be the Green Energy Act 2.0. However, this time, it won't be just electricity rates that soar, because now, as I mentioned before, sadly, their cap-and-trade scheme will be a tax on everything.

The Green Energy Act cost each household \$1,100 a year over and above what they were already paying. That's \$1,100 that could have gone towards saving for a home or for retirement. That is \$1,100 from taxpayers' pockets, and it's about to get worse.

Let's be clear here. I care about the environment, and the PC Party of Ontario cares about the environment. I would be remiss if I didn't mention today, Earth Day, which is a very important day across the world, that it was the PC Party of Ontario that invented the Ministry of the Environment. We were the party to shut down the first coal plant in Ontario, thanks to Environment Minister Elizabeth Witmer. The PC Party of Ontario created wetlands, stood for conservation, and we are truly the original environmental party here in Ontario. I just wish the other side of the House would acknowledge that.

That is why I find it shameful that this government is planning to implement the cap-and-trade system or, as we call it on this side, pay-to-pollute. I call it that because emitters will still pollute, but they'll just pay to do more of it. It is not helping or improving the environment; rather, it's just increasing the cost of doing business, which in turn raises the cost of living here in Ontario.

We have seen this system in place in other jurisdictions around the world, and what we have ultimately found is that it's been plagued with fraud and mismanagement. It is a system that allows government to choose winners and losers—so really, when you think about it, it should not come as a surprise that this system is best fitted for this particular Liberal government.

Instead of taxing all Ontarians, there are a number of other options that we could take a look at to deal with climate change without hurting businesses and families. We can take a closer look at the role of conservation, expanding forests, green spaces and wetlands. These are all natural and cost-effective solutions. We can also look at the role of innovation. We all know that the private sector

drives innovation as long as the government stays out of its way and does not further burden them with red tape.

There's so much more I could go on about, Speaker, but at the end of the day, I would like to remind everyone that what we are asking for here today, by way of our PC opposition day motion, is a sensible solution that the PC Party knows will address the dire economic state of this province.

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

Mr. Rick Nicholls: It's a pleasure to rise today to add my comments to the member for Simcoe–Grey's motion. It's actually a pleasure to rise today because we're finally going to be discussing fiscal responsibility in this House instead of the usual lip service that the government pays to responsibility in question period.

As I only have a few minutes today, I'd just like to highlight a couple of components of the motion that are of particular importance to the great riding of Chatham–Kent–Essex. We're calling on the government to make a commitment to reduce energy prices so that all people and businesses no longer have to be paying some of the highest energy costs in all of North America.

Yesterday I took a look at the Ontario Energy Board's graph of historical energy prices. The upcoming May 1 spike to energy costs was so massive that the on-peak energy cost didn't even fit on the OEB's graph. The Liberals have literally sent energy prices through the roof. Since then, they've added a bit of height to the graph so that the skyrocketing prices actually fit, but since October 2011, hydro prices in the province of Ontario have actually increased 49.1%. All of that is on the backs of hard-working Ontarians.

The graph that I was just referring to only goes back to 2006, but the latest hike is the biggest increase in energy costs in nearly a decade, and it's only going to get worse from here as the Liberals move forward with their incredibly dangerous and extreme plan to sell off Hydro One for pennies on the dollar in order to pay for projects that a real government would be able to cost without selling off key assets.

According to the Liberals' long-term energy plan, which was revamped in 2013, hydro prices will rise even more by 2018. Who knows how much further these prices will rise with the Liberals' plan to pawn off Hydro One?

This is an absolute disgrace. I know that the members opposite didn't campaign on this, and I wonder just how they feel about such a radical and dangerous plan. I wonder how many members sitting on government benches have ever had to fear the day that their hydro bill arrives in the mail. It's an awful feeling. And I wonder if any of those members have ever had to make the choice between keeping the lights on and putting food on the table. I know for a fact that the great people in the town of Ridgeway, no less, are fearing that whenever their hydro bill comes in. I cannot believe just how high their hydro prices are. Thank you to this government.

I also don't believe and don't know, really, how the members on that side of the House can, in fact, support a plan that will take so much money out of the pockets of their constituents and local businesses. In the case of small businesses, many people are going to be forced to choose between keeping staff or keeping the lights on.

The last part of this motion actually calls on the government to have a serious, credible and detailed plan to balance the budget by 2017-18. Now, I said a credible plan. If they can do that, that will, in fact, be incredible. This is in contrast to the government's ridiculous, unbelievable and detail-free sham of a plan to balance the budget by 2017-18.

Balancing the budget is a difficult task and it requires years of hard work and thoughtful planning. We look to Ottawa. They took the time to chip away at their deficit until they were able to present a balanced budget. It took a lot of steps to get there.

Interjections.

Mr. Rick Nicholls: Stop the partisanship, government. It's fact.

Ontario can also learn a thing or two about responsible spending from Quebec. They actually managed to present a budget that contains no new taxes and balanced the budget. In Ontario, you get several tax hikes and an unbalanced budget. It's the worst of both worlds. Falling behind Quebec, Ontario's government is sinking quickly in quicksand. Perhaps they think that the budget will just balance itself. I heard that from, I think, a federal Liberal leader at one point in time.

As I said, it takes many steps to get a balanced budget. The first step is admitting that you have an addiction, a spending problem. This government is simply addicted to spending. As soon as they get some spending money in their hands, they don't use it to pay down the crippling debt or help ease the increasing—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Okay, folks. I've been extremely lenient. There's been a lot of yelling. Please don't make me go into action. It's getting close. Cut it down. And not so loud, please.

Mr. Rick Nicholls: Thank you, Speaker. I was just trying to talk overtop of those nerve-ending voices I was hearing from the government side.

Let me reiterate. As soon as they get some spending money in their hands, they don't use it to pay down crippling debt or help ease the increasing financial burden that their government is placing on Ontarians. No, no, no. They simply run to the next pet project which is almost over-budget and delayed.

My constituents are simply tired of paying for Liberal mistakes, and when mistakes keep piling up, taxes get hiked, too. Taxes keep getting raised every which way you look, yet there is no indication that this government will be able to balance a budget, let alone within a couple of years.

The Auditor General warned the Liberals in her last report that failing to address the deficit will result in crowding out essential services like health care and edu-

cation. We've seen nurses being let go across the province, schools on the verge of closing and, in my riding, we could be on the verge of losing the Leamington District Memorial Hospital's obstetrics unit.

I've met with the Minister of Health, the Erie St. Clair LHIN, LDMH, concerned citizens of my riding and neighbouring areas and I presented petitions asking the government to keep the OB unit open. This clinic means too much to the people of my riding as well as neighbouring ridings, whose members are also mad about the potential closure, to scrap it just so that the government can fund yet another pet project somewhere else in the province.

The Liberals are planning on rewriting the law to use money raised from pawning off Hydro One to pay for unknown infrastructure projects, which they say will cut commute times in the GTA. Yet at the same time, they're happy to force delivering mothers in Leamington to commute for nearly an hour to give birth—totally absurd. This is a real double standard and a slap in the face to the people in my community and throughout rural Ontario.

The government is raising taxes—strike one. The government is failing to address the debt—strike two. And even with more taxes and debt, they're still cutting services—strike three. In my world of umpiring, you're out. And by 2018, this government will be out.

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

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Davenport is trying to outshout me. Further debate? All right. That was the last call.

Mr. Wilson has moved opposition day number 3. 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 opposed will say "nay."

I believe the nays have it.

Call in the members. This will be a 10-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1723 to 1733.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Order. Members, take your seats.

Mr. Wilson has moved opposition day number 3. All those in favour of the motion will please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Arnott, Ted	Jones, Sylvia	Scott, Laurie
Bailey, Robert	MacLaren, Jack	Smith, Todd
Barrett, Toby	MacLeod, Lisa	Thompson, Lisa M.
Clark, Steve	Martow, Gila	Walker, Bill
Dunlop, Garfield	McDonell, Jim	Wilson, Jim
Hardeman, Ernie	Miller, Norm	Yakabuski, John
Harris, Michael	Munro, Julia	Yurek, Jeff
Hillier, Randy	Nicholls, Rick	
Hudak, Tim	Pettapiece, Randy	

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): All those opposed to the motion will please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Nays

Albanese, Laura	French, Jennifer K.	Meilleur, Madeleine
Anderson, Granville	Gates, Wayne	Milczyn, Peter Z.
Armstrong, Teresa J.	Gélinas, France	Moridi, Reza
Baker, Yvan	Gravelle, Michael	Murray, Glen R.
Balkissoon, Bas	Gretzky, Lisa	Naidoo-Harris, Indira
Ballard, Chris	Hoggarth, Ann	Naqvi, Yasir
Berardinetti, Lorenzo	Hoskins, Eric	Oraziotti, David
Bisson, Gilles	Hunter, Mitzi	Potts, Arthur
Bradley, James J.	Jaczek, Helena	Qaadri, Shafiq
Colle, Mike	Kiwala, Sophie	Rinaldi, Lou
Crack, Grant	Kwinter, Monte	Sandals, Liz
Damerla, Dipika	Lalonde, Marie-France	Sattler, Peggy
Del Duca, Steven	MacCharles, Tracy	Sergio, Mario
Delaney, Bob	Malhi, Harinder	Singh, Jagmeet
Dhillon, Vic	Mangat, Amrit	Thibeault, Glenn
Dickson, Joe	Martins, Cristina	Vanthof, John
Dong, Han	Matthews, Deborah	Vernile, Daiene
Fife, Catherine	Mauro, Bill	Wong, Soo
Flynn, Kevin Daniel	McGarry, Kathryn	Wynne, Kathleen O.
Forster, Cindy	McMahon, Eleanor	Zimmer, David
Fraser, John	McMeekin, Ted	

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 25; the nays are 62.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): I declare the motion lost.

Motion negated.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): There being no further business, this House stands adjourned until 9 o'clock tomorrow morning.

The House adjourned at 1736.

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

Sergeant-at-Arms / Sergent d'armes: Dennis Clark

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Albanese, Laura (LIB)	York South–Weston / York-Sud–Weston	
Anderson, Granville (LIB)	Durham	
Armstrong, Teresa J. (NDP)	London–Fanshawe	
Arnott, Ted (PC)	Wellington–Halton Hills	First Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Premier vice-président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée
Bailey, Robert (PC)	Sarnia–Lambton	
Baker, Yvan (LIB)	Etobicoke Centre / Etobicoke-Centre	
Balkissoon, Bas (LIB)	Scarborough–Rouge River	Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée Deputy Speaker / Vice-président
Ballard, Chris (LIB)	Newmarket–Aurora	
Barrett, Toby (PC)	Haldimand–Norfolk	
Berardinetti, Lorenzo (LIB)	Scarborough Southwest / Scarborough-Sud-Ouest	
Bisson, Gilles (NDP)	Timmins–James Bay / Timmins–Baie James	
Bradley, Hon. / L'hon. James J. (LIB)	St. Catharines	Chair of Cabinet / Président du Conseil des ministres Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille Deputy Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint du gouvernement
Campbell, Sarah (NDP)	Kenora–Rainy River	
Chan, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Markham–Unionville	Minister of Citizenship, Immigration and International Trade / Ministre des Affaires civiques, de l'Immigration et du Commerce international
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	

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
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	Deputy Leader, Recognized Party / Chef adjoint du gouvernement
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

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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**

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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**

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Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Cristina Martins
Vic Dhillon, John Fraser
Wayne Gates, Marie-France Lalonde
Harinder Malhi, Cristina Martins
Jim McDonell, 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**

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Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Garfield Dunlop
Granville Anderson, Bas Balkissoon
Chris Ballard, Toby Barrett
Garfield Dunlop, Michael Mantha
Eleanor McMahon, Laurie Scott
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
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