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Tuesday 28 April 2015

Mardi 28 avril 2015

Speaker
Honourable Dave Levac

Clerk
Deborah Deller

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L'honorable Dave Levac

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
OF ONTARIO

Tuesday 28 April 2015

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE
DE L'ONTARIO

Mardi 28 avril 2015

The House met at 0900.

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

Prayers.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

2015 ONTARIO BUDGET

Resuming the debate adjourned on April 23, 2015, on the motion that this House approves in general the budgetary policy of the government.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Further debate?

Mr. Jim Wilson: To begin with, Mr. Speaker, I would just like you to know I'll be sharing my time with the member from Nipissing.

It's a pleasure to rise today to speak to Bill 91, the Budget Measures Act. I've been in this Legislature for a few of these budgets and budget bills, and it always amazes me how many areas of the province this single bill affects. Normally, these bills are stuffed with important changes to existing legislation, changes that stakeholders and people alike both voted for and wanted, but this budget bill is different.

This budget bill contains policy changes that not a single Ontarian voted for. There's the fire sale of our public assets without any concern for the province's hydro debt. There's the commitment to a carbon tax and a cut to health care dollars. The Liberal Party and the members opposite didn't campaign on any of those things—not a single one. There's a \$100-million tax on beer, cuts to apprenticeship tax credits and the film industry, and—most shocking—an increased deficit for the third year in a row.

This government continues to spend more than it takes in. That's no way to manage a government or achieve a balanced budget.

Applause.

Mr. Jim Wilson: That wasn't even a clap line.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: It's good to be the leader.

Mr. Jim Wilson: Oh, a couple of weeks to go.

Only this Liberal government could think that the way out of a hole is to keep digging.

Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Finance knows full well that the interest on the debt, tax dollars that the province literally throws down the drain, is over \$11 billion this year. It's growing at a rate of 5.4% every year; health care funding is only growing at 1.9%, by comparison. This year, education is even lower than that. Interest on

the debt is the third-largest expense on the government's books and it's growing the fastest.

Ontario can't afford more Liberal financial planning. That's why, as one of our five budget asks, we asked for a credible and detailed plan to balance the budget. Instead, the minister opposite put forward a budget that simply hopes the deficit will go away. He plans to cap spending but doesn't say how. He plans to increase revenue but, again, doesn't say how.

We all know this government hasn't met a tax they didn't like, leading us on this side of the House to believe that there are more taxes to come. Despite this fear, the Premier touted all weekend, on news shows, talk radio, in the media, that there are no new taxes in this budget. Yet there's a recommitment to a job-killing payroll tax, the Ontario registered pension plan—a payroll tax by this government's own admission—which will kill tens of thousands of jobs in its first year. That's why we asked for the government to abandon this damaging payroll tax but, again, they ignored us. They also ignored our calls to walk away from the carbon tax that will raise the price of everything: gas, electricity bills and even groceries. Again, the Liberals rejected our advice. Not only did the Liberals recommit to new taxes; they also didn't do anything to lower current ones.

This government did nothing to address our ask to reduce hydro prices in Ontario. People are being forced to choose between heat or groceries. Hydro bills have tripled since the Liberals took office, even with the Ontario Energy Board, and they're only going to go up with the majority sale of Hydro One. Not only could the government not guarantee hydro savings; they actually removed Auditor General and Ombudsman oversight of Hydro One in this bill. Now Ontarians will be forced to pay higher bills without any explanation as to why.

This is a direct reaction to the Auditor General's 2014 report, where she pointed out that the \$50-billion global adjustment tax brought in under the Liberals was simply a cover-up for their failed green energy policies. On that note, Mr. Speaker, I'm sure the Ombudsman's record-setting investigation into Hydro One's billing practices isn't favoured by the government either.

The removal of this oversight is concerning. We in the PC caucus have raised concerns about Liberal choices regarding the existing \$27-billion hydro debt in this province. That debt is supposed to be paid off by the money Hydro One makes. Now that money—60% of it—will go to private companies and the debt will balloon. A larger debt means larger interest payments, which means higher bills. That's the reality for this government. It's only

going to get worse before it gets better. Hydro bills have already gone up by about \$1,100 a year on average since the Liberals took office, and that's before the sale of the majority of Hydro One. Quite simply, Ontarians can't afford to pay more on their hydro bills, and that's not what the people across the aisle campaigned on.

The privatization of Hydro One should be done to improve customer service, to create lower rates and to improve the efficiency of the organization, not to find money to pay off the deficit of the government's own making. On that note, the government has actually reached a deal to sell Hydro One Brampton. They reached this deal behind closed doors, in secret, with no competing bids and no public input. They sold the asset for a set price in a backroom. Well, that's not good enough.

How do we know, other than to take the Minister of Finance's word and the Premier's word—and their word is a little shaky at best. We're to take their word for it that this multi-billion-dollar deal is the best deal for Ontarians. I don't buy that, and they shouldn't be allowed to get away with that. They should have the Auditor General looking at that deal to see if we are getting the best bang for our buck. It's truly an ironic approach.

On page 209 of the budget, the Liberals unveil plans to create a centre for evidence-based decision-making, yet pages 73 to 86 talk about maximizing assets, including the sale of Hydro One Brampton, without any evidence to back up their decisions. The lack of evidence is truly astounding for a government that claims to be the most open and transparent ever. It's baloney.

There's also no evidence that hydro bills won't go up. The Premier can't guarantee it, and when asked for proof rates wouldn't skyrocket, Ed Clark simply said, "We don't think so." Mr. Speaker, Ontario can't afford to take this government at their word.

One area where the Liberals are expecting Ontarians to take their word is that all is well in home care. Every day, the Minister of Health stands in his place and says that everything is fine. But we know Ontario's home care system is a mess. It's very badly broken. The Premier and her Minister of Health actually acknowledged this when they brought in Dr. Gail Donner to put forward recommendations to fix home care. Dr. Donner's report stated quite clearly that the status quo is not good enough, that Ontarians can't afford the same old home care system. That's why we in the PC caucus, as our fifth budget ask, recommended tying funding for community care access centres directly to outcomes and streamlining the agencies and bureaucracies that a patient must deal with in order to get care. But sadly, that is nowhere to be found in this budget bill.

Overall, we put forward five sensible policy directions to be included in this budget: walk away from the job-killing pension tax and carbon tax; fix home care and the deficit; and work to lower hydro rates. The Liberals ignored all five, leaving us no choice but to oppose this bill and the Liberals' budget. Ontario cannot afford to continue on the path the Liberals have set us on.

Mr. Speaker, I've spent most of my time today addressing what is not in the bill, but it's important to know what

is in the bill as well. Normally, budget bills deal with the finances of the province. Normally, these bills make changes to a variety of acts needed to fulfill funding commitments.

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But instead this budget bill takes that a step further. This bill reforms the Auditor General Act to actually force the Auditor General to submit her audits in full to the government before releasing them to the public. Simply, the Liberal government is tired of being embarrassed by the auditor. They're tired of the auditor doing her job and exposing things like a wasteful \$2-billion smart meter program or the \$1.1 billion wasted on relocating gas plants. The auditor's oversight should not be muzzled. This bill will actually make the government less accountable, less open and less transparent.

But this government has shown a willing tendency to do what it wants, regardless of its mandate. When it comes to the sale of Hydro One, I thought that one day a desperate Liberal government may get itself into such a fiscal mess that it may start having a fire sale of our precious assets. That's why, when I put forward the Electricity Act, 1998, I put a clause in that act that mandates that all proceeds from any future sale or partial sale of Hydro One must go to paying down the \$27 billion of hydro debt. If all \$9 billion of the 60% sale went on to that \$27 billion, we'd start to see hydro rates moving in the other direction.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: They don't want that.

Mr. Jim Wilson: They don't care. They don't want that.

So, again, our PC government made it illegal to use the proceeds to pay for anything but paying down Hydro debt until that debt was paid off. Instead of honouring the law, the Liberals have simply decided to change it. Mr. Speaker, that's not how the world works. No family in Ontario can change the law just because they want to. Not a single Ontario family can just decide they aren't going to pay their bills anymore, but apparently the Liberals can.

To recap: We have a Liberal government that ignored our five asks, introduced new job-killing taxes, changed the law to fit their plans and didn't take action to address Ontario's health care system or deficit. I think the people of Ontario are going to thank the PCs for not voting for this budget. It doesn't address their needs. It doesn't address the most pressing problems of the day. It takes more money out of their pockets and raises the cost of living for everyone. We will not support it.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): I recognize the member from Nipissing.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: It's hard to follow you. You spoke with conviction and had all the facts.

Mr. Jim Wilson: You just have to get as much sweat going as I have.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: I'll see what I can do.

Speaker, since the last budget all of the financial experts have warned the government that they need to drastically change direction. Since then we've seen a

downgrade from Moody's. We've seen a downgrade from Fitch. The Ontario Chamber of Commerce has warned that the direction we're heading is about to put us in crisis. The government hasn't listened.

Mr. Steve Clark: I gave them a downgrade too.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: You gave them a downgrade?

Mr. Steve Clark: Yes.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: The member from Leeds–Grenville downgraded the government as well. In fact, I think we all did.

Sadly, the government hasn't listened. The debt is rising. The Auditor General warned that we are starting to crowd out the services and the programs that we've come to expect.

Today the government is crowing about their spending on infrastructure, but let's get into that a little deeper than our leader talked about. He spoke about the hydro sale and the concerns that we have—which we'll be talking about for many days and weeks—but I want to talk specifically about the \$130 billion that was announced in the budget.

It is exactly the same announcement that was made in last year's budget. In fact, if you take the two and put them side by side, as I did in the lock-up, it's a cut-and-paste. Word for word, it's the same \$130 billion, just recycled. But the bad part about all this is that not only is there no new money. They, last year, were going to put this \$130 billion in with only needing to sell \$3.1 billion worth of assets over four years. That's all they needed to do. It was going to be the GM shares and a few other little things; \$3.1 billion is all they needed to make that \$130 billion work. So why, when the GM shares have already been sold, do we now need to sell \$9 billion worth of Hydro One? And as our interim leader told us, they're not putting the money into Hydro One, which would reduce the hydro bills; they're stripping it away to put it into this program—ostensibly to put it into this program. That's why our hydro rates are going to go up.

So now all of a sudden we need \$9 billion in hydro sales, we need the LCBO headquarters sold, we need the OPG building to be sold—these are all listed in the budget. We now need more than a dozen billion dollars to make that work. But none of that is actually going in to that \$130 billion. It's all being touted as transit, but it's a shell game. That money was already in the budget last year. The \$130 billion was already accounted for without this \$9 billion in hydro being required. They're talking about previously announced money, and now they're talking about new money coming in. All that is only to balance their budget, or to attempt to balance the budget. It's all about taking money that was already in the transit fund out, putting this new money in, but using the money they've taken out to attempt to balance the deficit. That's all this is about. There's no hesitation to tell the public that. It was already in the budget.

Why are we in this problem? It's because this government continues to spend. Spending was up \$2.4 billion this year—\$2.4 billion. They continue to tell us they're controlling spending—they're not. It's tax and spend.

Beer tax, the second installment of the aviation fuel tax kicks in, the Ontario payroll tax is going to kick in, and the mother of all taxes, the cap-and-trade tax on everything, which will be discussed this fall, was in the budget. This is going to be the biggest tax grab that we will ever have seen. Put a tax on everything.

Our leader already talked about the energy sector. They have bungled that sector so badly that people are choosing between food and fuel. It's to heat or eat. That's the decision people are making. Many of us, from all three parties, were in Ottawa this year at the pre-budget consultations, where obviously there was no consultation being done. There was obviously nobody that listened to anything; the decisions had already been made. That's, I think, one of the things that irks me the most: The decisions were made. The budget document would have been prepared as far back as that time.

We listened to Jennifer—her name was Jennifer—a woman on ODSP. She sat in front of us and told our committee—all three parties were there—that she has to shut her power off at 6 o'clock every morning to turn it on again at noon, only to shut it off again at 3 every afternoon and turn it back on at 7. That's what she has to do to save enough money to eat. She says, quietly, "I put a few more sweaters on." That's what she does. That's how she survives. That's the Ontario that these guys have created. That's the problem. They've been living off their credit card and not off their debit card. That's the problem we have in Ontario.

Speaker, when you think about the repercussions now—not just to the families, because there are going to be repercussions to the families—there are families who are going to have to sit down and have that chat with their kids about, "No, we can't do that this year. It's the hydro bill." Can you imagine that? That Ontario—

I walk to work every morning. I walk by the monument of Sir Adam Beck every single morning. Every morning I look at that and I think, oh my heavens.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: What he would think.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: What he would think now, knowing what has been done and what is being planned by these people to do to our hydro sector.

First of all, when I got elected mayor in 2003, hydro was 4.3 cents a kilowatt hour. That was what we used as an economic development incentive in Ontario. As mayor, I remember touting our industrial park: cheap power; we had cheap land. We had all kinds of good things to attract business. I watched as it deteriorated very rapidly—it deteriorated. Today, our power is more than three times what it cost back then—that's only 10, 11 years—and it's destined to go up. In fact, it's scheduled to go up 42% by 2018.

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Now, that's before this debacle that will unfold. That's before they sell Hydro One in a fire sale, take the money away and don't leave us the cash flow to pay our mortgage. We still have the mortgage to pay. There are still going to be bills to pay in Hydro One. Why can't they realize that? Families do. People are writing to us;

I'm sure they're writing to them as well. I don't think the email that comes is exclusive to opposition members, which says, "I can't pay my hydro bill. What are you going to do about it?" It's sad to have to write this back.

There are going to be consequences. There are consequences to families; there are consequences to business.

Mr. Jim McDonell: Goodyear.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: The member from Stormont, somewhere and somewhere—

Laughter.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: It's a great riding.

Mr. Steve Clark: Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: I've been there several times now, talking, actually, about hydro rates with very concerned stakeholders of the member.

But he just mentioned Goodyear. That's the consequence we're going to have. Goodyear: not going to expand in Ontario. Why? We've become the highest-cost jurisdiction in North America. We have the highest energy rates in North America. We have the highest payroll taxes in Canada. We have a government that has a deficit. Businesses do not like to locate in a jurisdiction that runs a deficit because they know darn well what's going to happen to them. They're going to put their hand in that company's pocket and extract more cash to fuel their spending habit. That's what's going to happen.

Speaker, I'm going to refer several times to the new Focus on Finance book here.

Interjections.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: It's got a hard copy now. It's got a hard copy. There's a chapter in the book that talks about taxes. Why? Here's a great example of what these guys are going to do. I'm going to lead that into why companies are not coming to Ontario.

Number one, here's a great example in the Victor mine up in Ontario's north. It's a diamond mine. It's the first and only diamond mine in Ontario. This company explored, they spent their own money, they dug into the ground and they found where diamonds were in Ontario. They started to go into building the mine site, but before they were done, they got a knock on the door one day from the province of Ontario telling them, "Oh, by the way, we're now introducing a diamond tax in Ontario. Every rock you pull out of the ground, we're going to tax. But don't worry, we're going to tax all diamond mines in Ontario." Of course, the Victor mine is the only one in Ontario.

Why? They saw an opportunity to dig in and extract some cash from yet another company that is now reluctant to be here, but they had already spent billions getting here. So off they go. Now their pocket's a little lighter, but they've put people to work.

I talked to the people in the Ring of Fire; I talked to all of the companies there. I've been there four times now and I can tell you why there's nothing going on there. First of all, these guys talk a mean game, but have not done a thing, not spent a penny. In fact, they haven't even applied for any of the federal money that's waiting there

for them—a billion dollars waiting for them; haven't even applied.

I can tell you what's wrong. We've asked. I think it was our member from Parry Sound–Muskoka who asked a question in the Legislature one day: "Are you contemplating a chromite tax?" That's the mineral that was found in the Far North. You know, the minister and the Premier would not say no.

You have to imagine these guys putting their business plan together. First of all, there's nothing happening up there; there's no way to get there; there's no way to get the ore out. They're worried. They are all individually worried that the second they start production, these guys are going to put a chromite tax in. Why not? They did it before. They did it to De Beers in the Victor mine. They have no shame. They will do that. That's the kind of thing that's holding them back.

Why is the government doing it? Because they have a spending addiction. They cannot stop their taxing and spending. It's an endless cycle, watching them tax more only so they can spend more.

The bond rating agencies are catching up to them, though. Moody's said last week that they continue to see risks in the province's budget. They went on to say, "Deficits have shown little progress in the past few years, and in fact have increased from 8.1% of revenues in 2012-13 to 9.2% in 2014-15." That's what's happening, Speaker. They're spending money we don't have.

Moody's concludes, "The return to balanced budgets by 2017-18 still faces considerable risks in our view."

They also suggest, "Provincial economic forecasts have tended to overestimate growth."

Here's what happened last year in the budget. The finance minister gave his budget forecast. I stood in this very place and said to him, "Your forecasts are wrong. You're budgeting too high. You will not make those numbers." The Bank of Canada said that you won't make the numbers. The Conference Board of Canada said that you won't make your numbers. The Canadian Federation of Independent Business said, "Hang on. Our businesses are slowing down. They're not fuelling that number you think you're going to hit." The Ontario Chamber of Commerce told us we had 2,700 fewer businesses in Ontario last year than the year before, and these guys pump up the revenue number.

What happened four months later? Only four months later, they had to stand here sheepishly and kind of shuffle their feet and say, "Aw, shucks. We were off by half a billion dollars"—half a billion dollars. They had to restate after only four months.

So that's exactly what Moody's said last week: "Provincial economic forecasts have tended to overestimate growth."

They say they're going to hit a number—a made-up number. They're not going to hit the number. We know that they fake the numbers. We've seen it time after time after time. They fluff the numbers.

Last year, in fact—I'm reading from an article—"Sousa"—they're referring to the finance minister—"said

the province has demonstrated it can control spending, noting it managed to trim its deficit by \$1.6 billion over the previous projections." Speaker, that would be pretty darn funny, actually, if it wasn't so sad.

He's saying, "We said the deficit would be \$12.5 billion. It was only \$10.9 billion. Aren't we great?" Well, you fluffed up the number to start with. We know you did. We have your own documents from the gas plants scandal that told us you purposely fluffed up your numbers—but then not even making the fluffed-up number.

One of the rating agencies said the only reason they met that \$10.9-billion number was "a \$335-million reduction in interest on debt (reflecting lower-than-anticipated interest rates)"—thank God rates went down—that "accounted for over half of the reduction from plan after taking into account the reserve." They had a billion-dollar reserve there. They didn't use that, obviously. It was in there to fluff it up.

So you've got money you didn't spend and interest that you didn't spend. Of course you made your number. Your fake number of \$10.9 billion was still higher than the fake number that they had in earlier.

Speaker, we're surrounded by all kinds of fake numbers.

Moody's is on to them. There's no question that Moody's is on to them. Moody's said they still have strong concerns. There are risk concerns that they have, and we're going to see in the next days and weeks if that plays out into a ratings change for us. That would be devastating for Ontario.

I can tell you again, when I served as mayor of the city of North Bay, we did the prudent, fiscal conservative things that were necessary to turn our economy around. In my seven years, we had five upward bumps of Moody's—five—till we matched the province of Ontario. We had one of the highest ratings of any municipality in Ontario, tied with Ottawa, tied with the province of Ontario. It was a great day when we hit that.

0930

After I left office and came here, it was a very sad day when Moody's downgraded the province of Ontario for their fiscal mismanagement and dragged along with them all of the other municipal and crown agencies that match the province. They couldn't have a rating higher than their guarantor. They all got dragged down. The city of North Bay's rating got bumped downwards through no fault of their own, just for achieving the title of being tied with the province of Ontario—one of the highest ratings brought down. It put borrowing costs up. It put borrowing costs up at hydro. All the hydro utilities, municipalities like Ottawa and North Bay and many of the universities—all got dragged down along with the laggards here at the province of Ontario, who brought our ratings down. That was a shameful day, and a very expensive day for taxpayers.

Speaker, I want to refer to a few sections in Focus on Finance because this is exactly what we said would happen in the province of Ontario.

Moody's debt-rating agency last year changed their outlook from "stable" to "negative." Why? They expressed their concerns over the government's ability to eliminate the deficit in three years. They said, "It can't be done."

Remember, Speaker: At the time, the debt was going from \$9.2 billion—got bigger, to \$10.5 billion. It skyrocketed to \$10.9 billion. We're going the wrong way, and Moody's acknowledged that, so they changed their outlook from stable to negative. They said, "Ontario's persistently large deficits, and its tendency to delay the most significant cost-cutting measures towards the latter years of its projected timeline for returning to a balanced budget, increase the risk that the province will be unable to achieve its goal."

What happened? The first paragraph in Moody's comment says absolutely clearly that they can't control their spending. What did they do? Spending is up \$2.4 billion this year. Moody's is right. They can't control their spending. They live off that credit card, knowing, Speaker, that you and everybody else here is going to have to dig into their pocket a little deeper and pluck out money to pay them. That's the addiction they have, knowing that it's fuelled with the ability to continue to tax you.

The Conference Board of Canada said that Ontario can't meet its pledge to balance the books by 2017 without spending cuts or tax hikes. Well, they're getting the tax hikes right, according to the Conference Board of Canada. They deny it, but we've seen them. We've seen the tax hikes: \$100 million on beer; the aviation fuel tax.

Down near the member from south—

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: —from Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry. I'm going to learn that one.

When I was visiting the member's riding, we passed by Prescott to get there. Just over the border from Prescott is an American town called Ogdensburg. Ogdensburg is a sleepy little town. It has a beautiful museum that Frederic Remington—his former house. It's a sleepy, quiet little tourist town. They're building an airport. Why? Because they want people from Ottawa to drive to Ogdensburg, cross the border and fly cheap, just like they do in Detroit, Niagara, Buffalo and everywhere else.

What do we do? We are raising the aviation fuel tax. It's a tax. It's a \$100-million tax. This is what's happening. They tax and they spend—spend \$2.4 billion more than they did last year.

The Auditor General said it best, Speaker. She said that Ontario's debt continues to "grow faster than the province's economy," which could have "negative implications" for the province's finances. But her conclusion was the most striking. She concluded that the consequences of high debt will result in what she called "the crowding out" of other spending. What does that mean, Speaker, "the crowding out" of other spending? It means—

Mr. Jim Wilson: We see it in health care.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: We are. Our leader is saying that we're seeing it in health care. I'm going to give those examples in a moment.

Our interest rate—if interest were a government ministry, it would be the third-largest ministry. After health, education—interest. Can you imagine that this is what we've turned to in the province of Ontario?

Mr. Jim Wilson: At low rates, too.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: And it is low rates. When those rates go back to normal—not if they go back to normal; when they go back to normal—can you imagine the devastation on our government budget and our pocketbook that that will have? Our rates are going up because of the increased spending. Our interest is going up 5.7% next year. That's the fastest-growing line item that we have in our budget.

The Auditor General said that we're going to start to crowd out the services. Here's what happened last year. It's very simple: We're paying interest with our health care dollars. We cut diabetes testing strips. We cut cataract surgeries. We cut physiotherapy for seniors. We're now using the money that went into those very important issues to pay our increased interest. That's the Ontario that these people have built. That's a shame. That is a shame.

In my hometown—I've said it many times standing here—we've lost 94 front-line health care professionals, including 54 RPNs. We've lost 34 part-time health care professionals, including nurses. We've had 43 people at Ontario Northland fired this year. We've had 54 people at Nipissing University fired this year, including 22 professors. This is what's happening, and not just in my community. I use my examples. Every single person here—and on that side, by the way—can give those same examples.

Mr. Robert Bailey: If they were free to speak.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: If they were free to speak; you're absolutely correct. That's what's happening.

The Auditor General has said that you're going to see a crowding-out. And boy, did it ever happen fast. She only said that in December.

She also said in December to look for a ratings downgrade. Shortly after, we heard from Fitch, and we heard from Moody's, when Moody's went from stable to negative. That's very serious. That has serious consequences. That reverberates through the financial community.

You have to wonder why we have companies—well, I guess we really don't have to wonder why we have companies like Kellogg's, Heinz, Caterpillar, Wrigley and, in your neck of the woods, General Mills leaving Midland. The list goes on and on. Every single one of us, and again, every single one on that side, has these stories as well. When you have a jurisdiction with the highest energy prices in North America, the highest payroll taxes in Canada and the highest-cost jurisdiction—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Order.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: I'll stick with the Auditor General. I realize that when the Auditor General presented these

facts, the Minister of Energy patted her on the head and said, "Now, now, you just don't know math." I remember. I was in the room that day watching him, in a condescending way, pat her on the head. I watched that.

The Ontario Chamber of Commerce came out with a report titled—and I think the title kind of gives it away. They're talking about the state of Ontario's debt and deficit. The title of their report is *How Bad Is It?* I think it's pretty bad, and I think they know it.

Here's what they're saying. "Some experts are calling it a crisis," and they believe the government "should be taking every step" to balance their books. They also state, "Ontario's fiscal situation is becoming increasingly dire." Those are their words. Those are the words of the 60,000 businesspeople in Ontario: "increasingly dire." That's not very encouraging to hear. That is not what we need to hear from our business community. They go on to say, "We are likely to reach a state of crisis unless the province cuts spending and changes the ways it does business."

Well, what did we see last week? Some \$2.4 billion in more spending. That's not going to make the chamber of commerce or the families that work for all of the companies that are members of the chamber of commerce very happy. They asked to cut spending. They increased spending. They asked to change the way you do business and they just give you more of the same. That's what they're doing—more of the same.

Our leader spoke only a half hour ago about one of our five asks: to put the patient close to health care. What do these guys do? Some \$750 million is being spent on bureaucracy now, on 69 of these health links. As if the CCACs and the LHINs weren't enough, we now have the links to deal with.

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Speaker, they're putting people farther away from an MRI machine, a CAT scan or even a Band-Aid. They're putting people farther away and spending money to do it, bloating bureaucracy—\$750 million. They ask that you change the way you do business. What do these guys do? More of the same. Crank it out, spend more money: \$750 million on yet another level of bureaucracy.

The Fraser Institute had a study called Ontario's Debt Balloon. Again, the name kind of tells you where we are: Ontario's Debt Balloon. They calculate that 66% of the increase in debt since the 2000 recession is directly attributable to day-to-day expenses. This isn't about stimulus money to get the economy going, a one-time shot. This is paying the day-to-day bills. You can't run your family like that.

As our leader said, we're going to see Hydro One being sold off. That money coming in is just going to pay the bills. In business, we call that burning the furniture to heat the house. That's all it's going to do. What are you going to sell next year or the year after? You haven't fixed the problem. We call it a structural deficit. Well, that's a bit technical. What that means is you're paying for things you can't afford. That's one-time money. When you sell hydro, you don't have another one to sell. You're using that money to pay your day-to-day bills.

That's like at home. You can't pay your hydro bill that month, so you sell the china that your aunt gave you. You've got no more china to sell the next year. You're running out of things to sell off. That's no way to run your household—you'd never do that—and that's no way to run the province, but they use that credit card every day.

Can you imagine that? Sixty-six per cent of that money is to pay day-to-day bills. I don't hear anybody over there arguing. These are facts. Their expenses exceed their revenue on an annual basis. Every year, they spend more money that they don't have.

It also states in Ontario's Debt Balloon that Ontario's debt has grown by \$117 billion since the recession largely because of government borrowing to fund day-to-day expenses, not infrastructure investments. They tell you one thing, but they're doing the other. They're telling you what you want to hear, but the reality, the facts that come out eventually—when we can get at them—tell us the real story, the different story. Again, they're talking about selling hydro to pay for transit. Don't believe a word of that. That is not what's happening in Ontario.

Jamison Steeve is a name we remember from earlier. He's now at the Institute for Competitiveness and Prosperity and at the Martin Prosperity Institute at the U of T. He penned a Toronto Star column called "Ontario Needs Major Shift to Get Economy Back on Track." I'm actually going to agree with Jamison this time. He states, "Ontario's economy is not producing as much wealth as planned, hoped or expected.... It is time for Ontario to take a new course to grow the economy." But they didn't listen; more of the same.

Interjection.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Yes, you're absolutely correct.

The Canadian Federation of Independent Business told us that 97% of small businesses are concerned about the state of Ontario's economy, with 67% very concerned. In addition, 91% of small businesses want to see the provincial budget balanced by 2017-18. Why? Again, because they know that if there is this annual deficit, as we've seen it growing, hanging over their heads—they know darn well that these guys are coming in, putting their hand in their pocket and they're going to take more tax away from them. Business knows that. They do not want to locate in a jurisdiction that can't manage its own money because they know darn well they're going to come after them to pay their bills. That's what's happening.

One of the things that we saw in the budget here on page 199, if I remember correctly, is probably the most egregious yet surprising thing that we saw. I spent seven hours in the lock-up with our leader, reading through the budget page by page, trying to find something of excitement. My eyes popped when I came to page 199 and saw this chart. This chart here is called "Ontario's Record against Deficit Targets," a fancy name for, "Look at us; we did way better than we said we were going to do."

But Speaker, let me—this is the chart here in the budget on page 199. It starts with a deficit of \$24.7 billion. We've been able to determine that that is a fake number.

I'm going to read to you right from the briefing documents.

This was a briefing document that we obtained through the gas plant scandal hearings. The gas plant scandal hearings not only proved to us that the gas plant scandal itself cost \$1.1 billion, it also proved to us the level that this government would go to to keep us from ever learning the facts: Ctrl-Alt-Delete. Delete, delete, delete, delete, delete. We learned all about that.

But in the 300,000 pages—of course, I digress slightly, because the first day we got the documents after a punishingly long wait of many, many months—we finally got the documents, 36,000 of them dumped on us—almost everyone here, 30 of them, if my memory serves me correctly, including 12 cabinet ministers, stood on this floor telling us, "You have all the documents." I remember that. I'll digress just a bit because I have to get that out of my system.

Two weeks later, it was another one of those shuffling of the feet, "Mea culpa, we found 20,000 more documents." There they were; they must have been under the carpet. So they give us the 20,000. As we got into the scandal hearings, under sworn testimony from the Ontario Power Authority, we learned that they were told to keep those 20,000 documents from us ever seeing them. That's the kind of level that this government goes to to keep us from ever learning the facts.

So this chart on page 199—I can't believe they used it again, because we outed the fact that this chart is a fake. Yet they must not have had the right hand and the left hand talking to the chart-producing person, because they put the same fake chart in again.

"In one briefing document prepared as 'Confidential Advice to Cabinet,'" these were senior finance officials repeatedly warning the Premier "that the economy has not regained full strength since the recession, with higher unemployment and growth still dragging." This secret document stresses that the facts and figures presented in the 2014 budget are only "'a plan' and are ... aspirational and notional figures"—they're not real figures—

Mr. Jim McDonell: Imaginary figures.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: —they're imaginary. Thank you. I'm still quoting—"with no substance behind them and confirms the government has no real plan to balance the budget.

"In fact, the Ministry of Finance admits" that this fake number here, the \$24.7-billion deficit, is complete fiction, "'was never a real expectation' and 'was a deliberate policy' to project 'a worst-case outcome.'" In other words, it was deliberately faked. "They also admit 'the path to balance was then drawn from there, assuming a straight-line trajectory of declining deficits.'"

Now, what does all that technical mean? It means they started with a fake number, knew they had to get to zero, drew a straight line and just filled it in. That was their deficit planning. How much is the deficit next year? Well, where does the line cross? There it is; it's \$12.5 billion. That's how they budgeted.

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We presented this as a fake document, and they're still using the fake document. That tells us they have absolutely no idea over there what the real budget numbers are. If they had to revert to the fake document we've been talking about for two years, it's scary.

The ministry officials go on to say that "it was assumed that spending would be constrained to whatever it takes to hit these targets." That's what they said. They drew a line down until it got to zero—and you're going to constrain spending: "When you've spent \$12.5 billion, stop." They were assuming it. But we've got these guys; they don't know how to constrain spending. Somebody should have told the Ministry of Finance. Basically, someone laid a ruler across, drew a straight line and said, "That's it."

The finance officials also divulged, "Over the medium term, we have notional targets by sector that add up to the deficit numbers, but not yet full plans to deliver on them." That's saying that we think we know where we want to go but we have no idea how we're going to get there. This is how they base the budget, Speaker.

This is still a quote: "For the extended outlook, neither sector targets nor plans yet exist." So we think we know where we want to go in the short term, but we don't know how to get there. In the long term? We have no idea even where to go. That's what they're saying in here. This is the once-secret document that concluded, "in order to hit the deficit targets, spending growth going forward has to decrease dramatically." Speaker, they didn't get the memo. It's up \$2.4 billion.

So what do we see as a result of that? We see downgrades from Fitch, downgrades from Moody's, we see the Ontario Chamber of Commerce—which did a fascinating study of their business just recently. It just came out. They talked about three years ago, when confidence in the Ontario government was 48%. Last year it grew to 49%. This year, Speaker, it tumbled to 29%. Nobody believes them. Nobody believes a word that these folks are saying. Absolutely nobody believes a word that they're saying. The Canadian Federation of Independent Business has told us, the Ontario Chamber of Commerce has told us, and the phone calls from families tell us every day. The seniors that call us who don't know what's happening with their hydro bills—they don't understand it and never had to worry about that before. For 100 years nobody had to worry about a hydro bill. Today, it's a big issue around families' tables—that's those families that at least have a job.

This morning 500,000 men and women woke up in Ontario without a job—still without a job. Last month, over 25,000 people lost their full-time jobs in Ontario. This is the Ontario that has been created by the Liberal Party. This is the Ontario that we live in today. This is the Ontario that our party will not accept. We will not accept that.

Our leader and our members have provided viable, solid plans to change the economy.

Laughter.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Oh, I'm sorry, they're laughing at lowering energy rates, Speaker. I apologize somehow for the laughter. For daring to suggest—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Order.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: For daring to suggest that hydro bills should be affordable, we get a roar of laughter from the other side. They're laughing in the face of every family who cannot pay their hydro bill today. That's what they're laughing at, Speaker.

They're bringing forward a payroll tax—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Order.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: —in their own secret documents, the payroll tax—

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): The member from Barrie, come to order.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: I realize you don't like that document. It was disclosed long before you got here and it's going to be brought up every single day because it's one of the few pieces of truth we actually have. It took not only the Auditor General but it took a police investigation to get our hands on it. Thank God we at least have that.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): I'd just like to remind the member that when you're addressing in the Legislature, you address the Speaker, not other members in the Legislature. Thank you very much.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Thank you, Speaker. I realize how it hurts the members on the other side to have that once-secret document brought forward that says that if you bring in a payroll tax, it's going to cost you 18,000 jobs, maybe 54,000 jobs, depending on how much they gouge out of us. They hate the fact that the document tells us about the 5,000 people who are going to lose their jobs immediately when they bring in their carbon tax. They hate the fact that we talk about the fact that their carbon tax is going to increase the price of gasoline three cents. These are all the things that our party stands against.

We brought forward five budget asks. None of the five were considered. In fact, as we discovered yesterday, as we sat through the budget schedule page by page—that budget schedule would have been written weeks, if not months, ago to divest hydro and other things. Speaker, this is their plan all along. For some reason, their idea is to hollow out the manufacturing sector in Ontario. Their idea is to send companies like Goodyear down to Mexico. That's what they're doing. They're sending Kellogg's elsewhere. They're sending Heinz elsewhere. They're sending Caterpillar back to the States to build. That's what they're doing, and that's what this budget will continue to do. That's why we will continue to stand up against all that is wrong in this budget. I thank you very much for the opportunity to speak on this.

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

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Mr. Speaker, I move adjournment of the debate.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Mr. Bisson moves adjournment of debate. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Debate adjourned.

ENDING COAL
FOR CLEANER AIR ACT, 2015
LOI DE 2015
SUR L'ABANDON DU CHARBON
POUR UN AIR PLUS PROPRE

Resuming the debate adjourned on April 21, 2015, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 9, An Act to amend the Environmental Protection Act to require the cessation of coal use to generate electricity at generation facilities / Projet de loi 9, Loi modifiant la Loi sur la protection de l'environnement pour exiger la cessation de l'utilisation du charbon pour produire de l'électricité dans les installations de production.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): When this item of business was last debated, the member from Niagara Falls had completed his speech.

Questions and comments?

Mr. Grant Crack: It's a pleasure to rise this morning in a follow-up to the passionate comments from the member from Niagara Falls.

Why are we introducing this particular act, the Ending Coal for Cleaner Air Act, 2014? It's because this act reinforces our commitment—this government's commitment—to end the use of coal at existing generation facilities and ensures that any new stand-alone generating stations will not use coal.

Ontario's coal-fired plants over the years have cost the people of Ontario an estimated \$4.4 billion per year in health care, environmental and financial impacts.

In 2003, prior to our government taking office, coal accounted for 25% of our generation. I can proudly stand in front of the members here today and say that we've eliminated all coal-fired hydro generation in the province of Ontario.

This act would amend the Environmental Protection Act. It would prohibit the use of coal at Atikokan, Lambton, Nanticoke and Thunder Bay generating stations after 2014.

Speaker, Atikokan was taken offline in 2012 and was expected to return to service burning bio-mass in August 2014. Having spoken with the Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry, they're currently burning pellets, which is a great process that I actually use in my own home. I'm glad to see there's been another use for that particular facility in his riding.

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The province announced the cessation of coal use at the two units in Lambton in October 2013, and the units at Nanticoke stopped burning coal on December 31, 2013. The last coal plant, as I mentioned, the Thunder Bay Generating Station, stopped burning coal at the end

of 2014. This is great news. We can continue to move forward with new renewable energy.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further questions and comments. The member from Huron-Bruce.

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: Huron-Bruce; thank you very much. I thought you said "Durham East"; that's why I looked around.

With that, Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to stand up and contribute to the conversation on Bill 9, the Ending Coal for Cleaner Air Act.

I just want to take this opportunity to recognize that we celebrated Earth Day last week. When I closed my comments last week, I suggested that Earth Day should be 365 days a year. I also recognized during my response to the minister that the PC Party of Ontario truly is an environmentally oriented party, although there are other folks who would try and suggest otherwise.

Interjection.

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: We were the party that created the Ministry of the Environment. Some of the newer MPPs elected to this House maybe need to do their homework to realize what I'm saying is absolutely the truth. Another fact of the matter is, it was the PC Party of Ontario that actually closed the first coal plant, and that was under the wonderful leadership of Elizabeth Witmer.

Ladies and gentlemen of the House, we have to do all we can to ensure that we do indeed have cleaner air to breathe. But we also have to make sure we balance that with people's ability to pay. I say that because time and time again in my constituency, we're getting calls from families and seniors saying, "We can't afford our bills anymore." This is a worry, and I'm afraid that this Liberal government of the day has totally thrown these people under the bus.

Municipalities are now reaching out to distribution companies, LDCs, saying, "Look, please try not to cut seniors' and families' heat off during the winter." I question if the despair that is being created across Ontario is what the Liberals really had in mind.

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

Mr. Gilles Bisson: This is a case of the government filibustering itself. Is there anybody in this House who is opposed to the closure of coal plants in Ontario? No, each party has taken pretty well the same position. Have all the coal plants in Ontario been closed? They have. So we're now debating a bill that, quite frankly, probably doesn't need to be debated because we've already closed the coal plants. Every political party in Ontario has taken essentially the same position, and the government is moving this bill forward through the House.

So you have to ask yourself why. I think it's very simply this: This government is looking to put forward anything that seems to be progressive in the face of an austerity budget and the privatization of hydro. That's what this is all about. The government is trying to say, "Look at this shiny penny over here. Look how progressive we are. We're going to ban the use of coal in

Ontario.” Who here in this House is going to vote against that? Nobody. We’re all going to vote in favour.

But the point is that the government needs to do this because they have an austerity budget that they’ve essentially stolen from Tim Hudak’s last campaign document. They’re essentially doing what Tim Hudak said he was going to do in the last election except they’re trying to do it under the guise of being a progressive government, as the Premier says, governing from the progressive centre. Give me a break. If you have a cut and you lose jobs—and it’s probably going to be close to the numbers that Mr. Hudak proposed in the last election—I don’t see that as being progressive. I see that as being a pretty regressive move.

To sell off Ontario Hydro at a time when hydro rates have gone up by 320%, to sell it for \$4 billion that the province is going to get for infrastructure when we can do it a lot cheaper by other means—for example, cancelling the HST input clawback that the big corporations are going to get would more than pay for this. This is a shiny penny trying to say, “Look over here. Don’t pay attention to the unprogressive things that the Liberal government is doing.”

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

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: It gives me pleasure to share some comments towards the member from Niagara Falls.

Some of the questions that I hear from the opposition—why are we doing this? Yes, the coal plants are closed. I think we’re all in agreement that we’re going to support this. But Speaker, we know that if legislation is not in place, things could change pretty quickly. Can they change the legislation in place? Yes, but it would be more difficult. Although today in this House we tend to have the same—

Interjection: The PCs would reopen them all.

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: I think what we’re doing is we’re trying to protect Ontarians.

Let me just tell you a little story that relates not necessarily just to coal plants, but to how cognizant our youth are today.

Just last fall, I went to see, with my grandson, the Belleville Bulls play for the last time—the last time. It’s a huge loss in Belleville. Driving home—he’s 10 years old.

Interjection.

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: I wasn’t going to go there. Don’t worry; it’s okay. I’m not going to go there.

My 10-year-old grandson—there is a pulp and paper mill in Trenton, right by the river, one of the very few in southern Ontario. There’s steam coming out of the stack—I call it “steam” because they have a steam reformer, because that’s the environmentally friendly way to do things today. And my grandson says, “Grandpa, what’s all that smoke going up in the air?” So I say, “A.J., it’s not smoke. It’s steam.” I was explaining. He paused for a bit and he said, “Grandpa, you can call it whatever you want to call it, but it’s something that’s

going in the air and it’s bad for the environment.” Now, that’s a 10-year-old kid.

I would say to you that we’re doing this really to protect the future of my kids, my grandkids and my great-grandkids. Thank you, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Back to the member for Niagara Falls for his final comments.

Mr. Wayne Gates: Thanks to my friends and colleagues for their comments on Bill 9, the Ending Coal for Cleaner Air Act.

Bill 9 formally ends the era of coal-fired stand-alone electricity generation in Ontario. The thing that’s most clear is that everyone really seems to enjoy the title of the bill. It sounds good. It’s something that we can pass. After all, who would be against cleaner air? The title of the bill allows you to give yourself a pat on the back, so why don’t we do that? Give yourselves a pat on the back. Go ahead.

One of the major errors here is that the bill does nothing proactive. As we have mentioned time and time again, the coal plants are already closed down. Just as this government is preparing to sell energy assets that belong to the people of this province to make some extra cash—and this is a point that was raised by my colleagues on the other side—a government may turn to coal to save money. So at the very least, this bill will put a stop to that and require consultation, with this legislation. Right now, that’s the best thing this bill is for. Other than that, it’s a pat on the back and does nothing else.

But really, what we should be discussing in this House—there are a lot more important things we could deal with this morning rather than legislating a problem that doesn’t exist. So I’m not sure why this bill was prioritized for this government, but it was.

Let’s think about what’s going on in the province of Ontario today. We have teachers on strike in Sudbury and Durham. We have auto workers in Oshawa who are worried about their job, in St. Catharines. We have CarePartner nurses in my riding of Niagara who are on strike because the employer will not deal with them. I met with those nurses on Saturday, and every patient came and told their story, how they’re not getting taken care of, how they’re showing up six and seven hours late to take care of their parents and their grandparents. That’s wrong. That’s what we should be discussing today. I appreciate the time, Mr. Speaker.

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

Ms. Eleanor McMahon: It’s my pleasure to stand in the House this morning on behalf of the people of Burlington to speak to the Ending Coal for Cleaner Air Act.

This act, along with so many other initiatives put forward by our government, puts the protection of Ontario’s environment and economy, and the health and well-being of our citizens, at the top of our priority list as a government.

If passed, this bill would legislate the protection of health and environmental benefits that come as a direct

result of eliminating the use of coal to produce our power.

Coal-fired generating stations produce some of the dirtiest power in the world. These facilities are amongst the largest producers of greenhouse gases, which, as we all know, are a significant contributor to global climate change.

In my riding of Burlington, Speaker, we came face to face with the impacts of climate change last August when a one-in-100-year storm brought 200 millimetres of rain on my community in just a few hours, impacting over 3,000 homes and causing close to \$100 million in damage.

Our government's decision to eliminate all coal-fired generating stations, a prime indication of our commitment to preserving our environment for the enjoyment of future generations, is the largest initiative of its kind anywhere in North America. This underscores our commitment to make Ontario greenhouse gas emissions as low as we can, prioritizing Ontarians' health and mitigating environmental damage to buildings, crops and ecosystems.

I will reference health in a moment, and I will be joined shortly by my colleague the member from Cambridge, who, as a nurse, can speak very well to the increased number of intakes in emergency departments as a consequence of asthma and what getting rid of coal has meant to those numbers.

To achieve this, it's not simply enough to eliminate all facilities that currently use the burning of coal as a way of generating power. We must also ensure that these types of facilities cannot be built and/or operated at any point in the future. Opponents of this legislation will point out that there's regulation that exists already which eliminates the use of coal in power generating in existing locations, but it fails to address any new facilities that may one day be built. This bill does just that: It will prevent the use of coal for producing power at any facility in Ontario, plain and simple, safeguarding our health and well-being now and that of future generations.

This issue does not only affect our environment; it also has a significant impact on the economy. The costs associated with these types of facilities are estimated to be \$4.4 billion per year. This includes both short- and long-term health effects attributed to poor air quality, pollution and climate change. Since we shut down the coal-powered plants, as I mentioned, we've had fewer smog alerts, and as someone who suffers from asthma and lives in a riding where close to one in five citizens is a senior, I certainly appreciate—and I know these vulnerable citizens do too—the impact this legislation and this initiative alone has had on our quality of life. This initiative has no added cost to it, only the added benefit of reducing costs.

Businesses that rely on the use of coal for other processes and production need not fear, however, as this bill will only apply to facilities that use coal for the primary purpose of generating electricity. Companies that use coal or its by-products in the production of metals, for example, will be able to continue their operations as normal. There's no intention of banning the use of coal for

these purposes, as there are currently no alternates. Advances in technology must be made before such a step could be made without having significant negative economic impact on Ontario.

This is not to mention the potential long-term health and environmental impacts which we have not yet seen. We have already made inroads into our understanding of these effects but it is difficult to know what will happen in the decades to come. All over the world, governments are making the decision to move away from the use of coal in their power generation facilities, and I am proud to be part of a government that is leading the way. By becoming the first jurisdiction in North America to completely do away with coal generation and ensure that it can never be used again, Ontario is taking the equivalent of up to seven million cars off the road. This legislation will do much to ensure that our health and enjoyment of our natural beauty and environment that we have come to love and treasure as Ontarians, and expect in our province as well, are protected for the enjoyment of all Ontarians for generations to come.

Thank you very much for this opportunity, Speaker. I appreciate the chance to speak to this very important piece of legislation.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): In fairness to the next speaker, so that she's not interrupted—it is almost 10:15 at this point in time—the Legislature will be recessed until 10:30.

The House recessed from 1014 to 1030.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: I'd like to introduce my wife, Jane, who's here today. She's here because our granddaughter, Madison, is page captain today. But she's also very proud—she's a councillor in the township of Severn. She and I—we're bragging about this now, Mr. Speaker—won the log-sawing contest at the Elmvale Maple Syrup Festival on Saturday in record time.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. I'm also told she's going to watch how you behave today.

Introduction of guests?

Mr. Percy Hatfield: I'd like to welcome Kevin Gillis to the Legislature this morning. Kevin is the father of page Mira Gillis. Normally, Mira would be attending St. Anne French immersion school in Windsor, but today, she is our other page captain. Her dad is here on this special occasion, so welcome, Kevin.

He also owns about five harness racehorses, so if anyone on the other side wants to talk harness racing, Kevin's the guy to have that conversation with.

WEARING OF RIBBONS

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The government House leader on a point of order.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: Point of order, Speaker: I believe you will find that we have unanimous consent that all members be permitted to wear ribbons in recognition of the National Day of Mourning.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The government House leader is seeking unanimous consent to wear ribbons for a National Day of Mourning. Do we agree? Agreed.

The pins are available in both lobbies.

NATIONAL DAY OF MOURNING

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

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: On a point of order: I believe you will find that we have unanimous consent that up to five minutes be allotted to each caucus to speak on the National Day of Mourning and that we observe a moment of silence following our remarks.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Mr. Naqvi is seeking unanimous consent that up to five minutes be allotted to each caucus to speak on the National Day of Mourning and that we observe a moment of silence following the remarks. Do we agree? Agreed.

Deputy Premier?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Thank you, Speaker. I will be sharing my time with the government House leader.

Speaker, April 28 is observed across Canada as the National Day of Mourning. On this day, we remember and honour the thousands of men and women who have been killed or injured on the job. Today, we also pay our respects to the families and friends whose lives have been affected by a workplace tragedy.

On behalf of the government, I would like to express my deepest sympathies to those affected by the tragedy of workplace injuries and fatalities. One life lost is one too many.

April 28 was chosen as the day of mourning because on this day in 1914, the Workmen's Compensation Act was given third reading in this Legislature. Since the 1980s, Ontario has been recognizing the day of mourning. Today, the day of mourning is recognized in more than 100 countries around the world.

This morning, the Premier and the Minister of Labour are attending a National Day of Mourning ceremony at the Workplace Safety and Insurance Board. They will remember and honour those workers who have died, been injured or suffered illness in the workplace.

They will also renew our commitment to the promotion of healthy and safe workplaces and the prevention of future fatalities. Our government understands that when workplace tragedies happen, lives are devastated, forever changed. Families, co-workers, whole communities are faced with the very painful reality that their loved one is not coming home or will never be again. These tragedies are immeasurable.

Our government understands that no job is worth a life or an injury, and that more needs to be done to make sure everyone comes home from work safe and sound.

I would now like to give my honourable colleague the government House leader and Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services the opportunity to speak about this important day.

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

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: Thank you, Speaker. I would also like to express my deepest sympathies to those affected by the tragedy of workplace injuries and fatalities.

Our government understands that we must make sure that the culture of every workplace in Ontario prioritizes the health and safety of its workers. Every person in every workplace has an important role to play. By working together, we can make sure people come home from work at the end of the day.

I want to acknowledge the work that's being done by Ontario's Ministry of Labour and the minister on this important issue. The Minister of Labour will be making a statement in the House later on this important topic, but I want to highlight a few things we have been doing as a government.

The Ministry of Labour, in partnership with our labour and employer partners, is transforming workplace health and safety in the province. And we are making progress. Over the last 10 years we have reduced injuries by 40% in Ontario. This has made Ontario one of the safest places to work in Canada.

We have also been changing how we look at mental health injuries because we know a mental stress injury, such as PTSD, can be as damaging to a person as a physical injury. That's why the Minister of Labour hosted a summit on workplace mental stress on March 5. Minister Flynn brought together workers and experts from a wide range of sectors and participants to share innovative approaches, best practices on how to reduce stigma by promoting cultural change, and learned from industry leaders how to enhance the mental health and safety of employees.

It's also worth noting that the government is investing \$4.4 million to help the OPP establish an employee wellness section, which will dedicate resources to address mental health issues among members, retirees and their families.

Our government has doubled the number of workplace health and safety inspectors in Ontario. Earlier this month, we took action to prevent falls in the construction sector by making new working-at-heights training mandatory. Also, we are continuing to conduct inspection blitzes throughout the year to raise safety awareness and help prevent injuries and fatalities.

We are making progress on all these fronts. We will continue to work hard to make a difference for workers in Ontario.

Despite this progress, there are still too many people who have been killed or injured on the job. Our work is far from done.

I would like to close by again acknowledging the women and men who have lost their lives or have been injured on the job, as well as their families, friends and colleagues. Our government is standing with you.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Further statements?

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: It is my pleasure and distinct honour to represent the Ontario Progressive Conservative caucus in discussing today the provincial and National Day of Mourning. I congratulate the Deputy Premier and the government House leader for their words.

Today we are gathered, and we will be gathered again this afternoon, to remember workers who didn't make it home from their jobs. In this country, when someone leaves for work, we expect that they will come home, but tragically in many cases they do not.

I'm going to give you an example. On May 9, 1992, when I was a grade 11 student in a small town called New Glasgow, Nova Scotia, at 5:36 a.m., our community awoke to one of the biggest mine disasters in the world's history, the Westray mine disaster. It was a brand new mine, and in the early morning of that Sunday, that explosion of methane gas changed that community forever. I remember that the other students in my class, my younger sister, in fact, even my father, who was a town councillor at the time, worried. In a small town like that, everyone knew somebody who worked at that mine, or was likely related to them.

The opening of the mine brought people from around the world to work in a small town in Pictou county, Nova Scotia, because there were jobs. Unfortunately that work site was not safe, and 26 men, aged from their early twenties into their fifties, died that day.

We would go to school for the following week as they talked openly in public about identifying people's dental records. We would be in class—I was in law class; I was taking a grade-12 law class in grade 11—and our teacher took the time to walk us through what this meant for our community. I remember politicians coming in from across Canada into the New Glasgow stadium, to fill that place as if it were the biggest funeral I had ever attended. I'm sure every single person in the community was there.

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I raise the Westray mine disaster in New Glasgow, Nova Scotia, here today for a reason, because it was that national tragedy in that small town, impacting 26 families and, by extension, an entire country, that changed legislation nationally for better worker protection—Bill C-45.

Years later, I would go on to work at Parliament Hill as a young staffer—very junior. I remember with pride the Westray miners who would come up and lobby the government for change, for greater protection. The Westray mine example speaks to what is so bad that was actually changed, because there were, before that, no criminal protections for any worker, prior to that. The people of New Glasgow, Nova Scotia, and in fact, I think, all of Canada would go on to see the changes that would need to be made to make workplaces safe.

I commend all members of this assembly for greater workplace safety. I would also like to commend the Canadian Labour Congress for their vision on this back in 1984.

As we today speak and remember the people who didn't come home from work or, as the government House

leader said, may have post-traumatic stress disorder, I think it's important that we continue to understand that lives aren't simply changed by legislation; enforcement may also protect them.

My experience when I was growing up is something that I hope no other community ever has to experience. It's important that, I think, we learn from those lessons to make sure that people do come home from work.

Later this afternoon, our colleague the member from Lanark-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington will speak on behalf of the Ontario Progressive Conservative caucus. He is right now with the Premier and the minister. He will add his views to why it's important to remember each year on April 28, on the National Day of Mourning.

But before I end, I think it's also important that we share a focus on rehabilitating and reintroducing workers back into the workforce. Our goal should always be to have people using their talents to provide for themselves and their families and to live a long, happy, prosperous and healthy life.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Further statements.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: It is my honour to stand in this House today on the National Day of Mourning to reflect on the people, women and men, who have been killed and injured on the job—on this day, April 28, which we do every single year, to speak on behalf of the Ontario New Democratic caucus as we join with workers across Ontario to mark this day.

Today we stand not only as a caucus ourselves but with other members of this Legislature and with people around our province and around our country. We stand with friends and family to remember those who have been injured, maimed or killed on the job.

We all have a responsibility to make sure that when the workday ends, every single worker makes it home safely after their shift, after their time at work. In Ontario last year, 349 people were killed on the job, thousands were injured, and countless more people dealt with complications due to work-related illnesses and disease. These numbers reflect an unacceptable trend of deaths over the last few years and hundreds, if not thousands, of injuries.

In 2012, 298 workers lost their lives. In 2011, it was 349 workers. In 2010, it was 398 workers, and on and on—far too many people. These are the people who lost their lives. These are the families who lost loved ones. As I said, there are thousands and thousands of others, not reflected in those numbers of people, who were exposed to environmental toxins and who were exposed to stresses in the workplace that led to PTSD. Speaker, many more people were felled with illnesses and with diseases—as those also who were killed.

As a province, we have a duty not only to honour these women and men but actually to ensure that our obligation stretches to make a difference for the future of workers in this province. We do this by making sure, for example, that workplace safety standards actually reflect the changing workplaces that we have in the province of Ontario—workplaces, for example, in construction,

manufacturing, mining, firefighting and other hazardous places.

Speaker, in 2009, you may recall that there was a fall on a construction site that led to something called the Dean report, which was commissioned by the government back in 2010. This is a report specifically for workers who are working in high places in the construction industry. We know that in 2014, four years after that initiative, we had seven workers die from high falls in the construction industry. Something is still not working. We saw a couple of deaths just in the last couple of weeks on construction sites in this province. There is something that is still not right when it comes to making sure that these workers are protected on the job.

I'm proud to stand with a caucus that has been working to ensure that this province has greater workplace protections, helping first responders get recognition and treatment for post-traumatic stress disorders, for example; protecting child performers on the job; protecting the rights of interns in the workplace; and many, many other initiatives that New Democrats have brought to this chamber in recent years as well as historically.

Too often, this government has been dragging its feet on some of the most important health and safety measures. It's important to acknowledge that today, because if we don't acknowledge it, we're not going to fix it for the future.

We have now recommendations that have come from a review of the mining health and safety act. It had been 30 years since the mining health and safety act had been reviewed. The workers in that industry were pressuring the government for years and years. In fact, they were calling for a public inquiry because it was so bad, the changes that had happened in the mining industry not being reflected in the language that was supposed to be the legislation that protected those workers on the job.

Now what the government needs to do is act quickly on the recommendations that come from that review that they took on. I congratulate the government for finally taking that review on and doing that work and doing that consultation, but that's not good enough. The changes that are recommended have to be implemented.

Every injury, every death in the workplace is one too many, but every year we see these tragic events on the construction site, on the factory floor, in the field, underground and on the front lines. Families in the north and across the industrial heartland in rural areas and in our cities are left to pick up the pieces of their lives when their loved ones are suddenly taken from them at work.

Every Ontarian has the right to safely earn a living. Every worker is entitled to the same protection, but the explosion of part-time and precarious work leaves far too many workers vulnerable to greater workplace risks and leaves them with fewer protections to speak up about workplace safety, for fear of losing their jobs.

Every working person in Ontario, and their families, deserves the right of peace of mind. No Ontarian should ever have to worry if a loved one will go to work and never return.

New Democrats are committed to strong safety regulations and enforcement. We're committed to working with employers, unions, safety specialists, WSIB and the government to make Ontario's workplaces safer for every Ontarian. We can't stop until workplace accidents stop. Until then, we mourn for the dead and we fight for the living.

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

At this time, we have been asked, in the unanimous consent, to spend a moment of silence. I would ask all members of the House to please rise in respect of the National Day of Mourning.

The House observed a moment's silence.

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ORAL QUESTIONS

HEALTH CARE FUNDING

Mr. Jim Wilson: My question is for the Minister of Finance. Minister, on page 288 of the budget it clearly shows that the Canada Health Transfer has increased by \$652 million this year. That is money the federal government has specifically earmarked for health care in Ontario.

On page 289 of the budget it shows that the Ontario health budget only increased by \$598 million. That means there is \$54 million missing. That means you took \$54 million from the health care budget to pay for your fiscal mismanagement. It's exactly what the auditor said recently was going to start happening because of your high debts and deficits. You're crowding out important programs; in this case, health care.

Minister, what did you do with the \$54 million the federal government gave you specifically for health care?

Hon. Charles Sousa: Minister of Health.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: I think the member opposite, being a former health minister, probably knows that the Canada Health Transfer only represents about a quarter of the health expenditures in this province, roughly \$13 billion out of \$50 billion dedicated to provincial health care this fiscal year.

For example, in 2014-15, the federal government transferred \$473 million, but health spending went up by \$1.2 billion. So the federal transfer doesn't even come close to filling that hole, and the imbalance will even increase in the coming years. In 2017-18—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Order. That round was the freebie.

Carry on.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: That sharing between federal and provincial that used to be 50-50 is down to 25% from the federal government. That imbalance that we're seeing, which is going to get worse in 2017-18, will remove \$21 billion from health care transfers nationally and \$8 billion in Ontario alone.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Jim Wilson: Back to the Minister of Finance: You can spin this all you want, but they gave you \$652 million and your total budget only went up by \$598 million. Somehow, somebody along the way stole \$54 million out of health care. This is the equivalent—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): That's too edgy. I'm going to ask the member to withdraw.

Mr. Jim Wilson: Withdraw.

Fifty-four million dollars is the equivalent of 9,000 long-term-care beds. A constituent of mine is desperately waiting for a long-term-care bed; however, none are available. Because of the long waiting list, this resident is in a retirement home—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Minister of Transportation.

Mr. Jim Wilson: It's a true story. That home is costing his family over \$7,000 a month to cover the cost of the care he needs. That is care he could be receiving if you didn't divert \$54 million of health care money to something else.

I say to the minister again: Why did you cut your share of health care funding when we need more long-term-care beds, for example?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: As I mentioned, that 50-50 sharing that used to exist between ourselves and the feds is now down to a 25% contribution, which is going down even substantially—that \$21-billion hole nationally that is about to face us.

I would suggest to the member opposite that that individual in his riding could get the support they need if he had actually started advocating for Ontario instead of the federal Conservative government so that Ontario gets its share, because the federal government has abdicated its responsibility to actually provide support to the province based on the changing demographics.

In fact, the federal Parliamentary Budget Officer has suggested that the federal government has pretty well insulated itself from the fiscal impact of an aging population. We can't and we won't do that in this province. I would hope that the PC Party would advocate on behalf of Ontarians instead of the federal PC Party.

Interjections.

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

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Minister of Transportation, second time.

Final supplementary.

Mr. Jim Wilson: I'd say to the minister that in my first month as health minister in 1995, Paul Martin had the health transfer down to 13%. You're getting 25% from the federal government.

It's \$54 million that has gone missing. They gave you that money. What did you do with the money? It's a pretty simple question. That could have paid for the 20 new hospices that you promised in last year's budget and have done nothing about, including Matthews House

Hospice in Alliston. You could use it to build new nursing home beds. You haven't built one new nursing home bed or long-term-care bed in 12 years. Instead, you took that precious federal money that was given to you, \$54 million, and frittered it away on your fiscal mismanagement.

I'll ask you again, Minister: Where did the \$54 million of health care money that the federal government gave to you go?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: As I mentioned, this fiscal year alone, health care spending in this province went up by \$1.2 billion. The federal contribution to that was less than the 50% that it used to be. It was \$473 million, which left a large gap—a gap which is only going to increase over time as the federal government continues to abdicate their responsibility to address the changing demographics in this province and across the country.

I implore the member opposite, the interim leader of the Progressive Conservative Party of Ontario, to advocate on behalf of Ontarians and not defend the federal government; to stand up for Ontarians, stand up for health care in this province, and don't back up the federal government as they continue to withdraw providing that important service.

Interjections.

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

GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Good morning. My question is for the Minister of Finance.

Your team has been busy for weeks, if not months, stripping away any transparency in our hydro sector. Your budget details reveal quite a story. The moment even one single share is sold, Hydro One will not be deemed an agency of the crown any longer.

Schedule 3 strips the Auditor General of powers—no more value-for-money audits over there. Schedule 10 cuts out the Financial Accountability Officer after six months. In schedule 11, the Financial Administration Act is amended to limit our ability to obtain any information on Hydro One.

Minister, what's happening here is the wholesale stripping of access to any information about an asset the people are the largest shareholder of. Is that your idea of being open and transparent?

Hon. Charles Sousa: We are taking advantage of a crown corporation of Ontario—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Leeds-Grenville, the member from Oxford and the member from Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound will come to order, and there are a few others I could get.

Hon. Charles Sousa: —to maximize the value of this corporation and make it into a growth corporation, recognizing that we can do better. As a result of that, we're reinvesting dollar for dollar all the gains that are realized from the broadening of that ownership. We're making an

initial public offering in the months to come, so that we can do the first 50% tranche, which will be applied to the consolidated debt as well as the Trillium Trust, in order for us to reinvest it into transportation, to garner even greater return and again start to employ and make another valuable asset for the province of Ontario.

Mr. Speaker, that is an appropriate thing for us to do. The member opposite actually agrees with that, because they've advocated for these kinds of opportunities—

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

Mr. Victor Fedeli: It's clear you don't want us to know anything your government is really up to. We had to scrounge for files in the gas plant scandal hearings, only to find that many were deleted. You've taken care of that early this time on the Hydro One sale. You've made sure we have no access to anything Hydro One-related. In schedule 13, freedom of information no longer applies to Hydro One. We don't get to know a thing. Minister, you gave FIPPA the flippa.

Schedule 38 removes Hydro One from the sunshine list. That was one of the most controversial disclosures last year.

This is one way, Minister, for you to stop the flow of information. Is that your idea of being open and transparent?

1100

Hon. Charles Sousa: Mr. Speaker, our idea is to ensure that we will have oversight—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Member from Renfrew and member from Simcoe North, come to order. I'm not going to have people shouted down in this place.

Carry on.

Hon. Charles Sousa: We will have oversight. We are appointing a new ombudsman. There is going to be the structure of an initial public offering. There's going to be an AGM. There are going to be requirements for disclosure in that regard. We also recognize the discipline that's required in respect to the release of documents and financial requirements of the public corporation that would be established.

Mr. Speaker, what we are not doing is the lack of oversight that occurred with the sale of the 407. We're ensuring that the public is protected, and we're taking an incremental approach to what's necessary with respect to the broadening of ownership of Hydro One—for the benefit, ultimately, of the people of Ontario.

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

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Minister, no AG, no FAO, no FIPPA, and now under schedule 22, lobbyists don't have to register any longer. Schedule 23 excludes Hydro One from the oversight of the Management Board of Cabinet Act. Schedule 28 takes Hydro One out of municipal freedom of information. Schedule 30 guarantees the Ombudsman would no longer be able to investigate Hydro One; you're going to put your own person in that role. Schedule 37 means no more Integrity Commissioner.

Well, considering there's no integrity left in the system, you won't need any of those officers.

Minister, at what point does shame kick in?

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): No, stop the clock. Be seated, please.

Minister.

Hon. Charles Sousa: What was shameful is the way that the member opposite and his party sold away Highway 407 for a song, and we're still paying for it today. What is shameful is what they did when they tried to dismantle the hydro system, which has left a legacy of debt to us still today. We are doing what's correct to try to bolster the value of the corporation. We're implementing parameters as well as structure to ensure that disclosure is done and fully transparent.

The member opposite knows that full well. He's just playing politics. We're playing for the benefit of the people of Ontario.

PRIVATIZATION OF PUBLIC ASSETS

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is for the deputy leader. Selling Hydro One is the wrong decision. Ontarians know it. If the Premier was so proud of her plan, she'd actually be calling it what it is, which is a sell-off.

But the Premier knows that Ontarians don't want her to sell off Hydro One. That's why she uses terms like "optimization" or "unlocking value" instead.

Will the Liberals finally admit that selling Hydro One is the wrong plan for the people of Ontario?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Speaker, what is the right plan for the people of Ontario is that we make the necessary investments in infrastructure. This is all about building new infrastructure.

I know the leader of the third party is planning to hit the road to talk to people about this issue. When she goes to Brampton, I really hope she's going to ask how they feel about the \$1.6-billion investment in the Hurontario-Main LRT. I wonder what they'll say about that. I wonder, when she goes to Hamilton, what the people there will have to say about the investment in rapid transit there.

Speaker, the truth is that Ontario needs this kind of investment in infrastructure. Our economy depends upon it, and people depend upon it because they're spending too much time in traffic when they could be at home with their families.

When you go across this province, to the leader of the third party, I'm asking—

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Speaker, what people need is affordable reliable hydro, not a sell-off to Bay Street. That's what people need.

During last summer's election, the Premier kept Ontarians in the dark about her plan to sell of Hydro One. New Democrats did launch a campaign; thank you for recognizing that. We launched it yesterday so that Ontarians could actually make their voices heard. In the last 24

hours, more than 2,000 Ontarians have sent a pretty clear message: People don't want to pay the price for more wrong decisions by the Premier. They do not like her sell-off plan.

Will the Liberals actually listen to the people of Ontario? Will they listen to those folks instead of their friends on Bay Street and pull the plug on this terrible, terrible plan?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Speaker, I think it's time that the leader of the third party came clean about what infrastructure projects she would cancel. As she travels the province, I hope she will come forward and say which ones are on the cutting block. Will it be Connecting Link? Talk about listening to people. Connecting Link is a very important program that we're restoring, because we heard about it. Will it be—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The banter back and forth is not appreciated, especially when someone is trying to answer.

Carry on.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Will you be cancelling 15-minute service from Union Station to Bramalea? Will you cancel the northern highway projects? Will you end the Ontario Community Infrastructure Fund?

Governing is about making decisions. It's easy to criticize, but we want to hear your plan.

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Nobody believes a word this Liberal government says. That's the bottom line. I can't say anything else, Speaker. That's the bottom line.

Selling Hydro One is going to mean higher bills for Ontarians. Hydro One is simply too important to give away, and once the Premier gives Hydro One away, we will never, ever be able to get it back.

Why are the Liberals plowing ahead with a plan that they have no reason for, no mandate for and that people do not want?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Speaker, I know the member opposite is saying that this will increase rates. I really think she needs to be clear that the Ontario Energy Board will continue to set rates. Nothing is changing. Nothing is changing when it comes to rates.

The Ontario Energy Board has made decisions that have decreased rates in March just this year. The Ontario Energy Board decreased rates by between \$100 and \$168 for Enbridge and Union Gas customers.

In 2010, Hydro One asked for a rate increase for distribution; the OEB ordered a 9% reduction in a capital request. In 2012, Hydro One asked for a rate increase for transmission; the OEB ordered a 3% decrease.

So nothing is changing when it comes to rates, and I think that the party opposite needs to be honest with the people of this province that that argument just does not hold water.

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: I really didn't think the Liberals could get even more out of touch, but here we have it.

PRIVATIZATION OF PUBLIC ASSETS

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Speaker, my next question is for the Deputy Premier. Can the Deputy Premier, the chair of the Treasury Board, justify spending nearly \$7 million on high-priced consultants to help the Liberals sell off Hydro One?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Speaker—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Carry on, please.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Speaker, when our government was making the decision around expanding the ownership of Hydro One, we did want to do it in a careful and thoughtful way. We wanted to protect ratepayers. We wanted to protect taxpayers.

One of the things that I think the member opposite needs to understand is that we will be the largest shareholder of Hydro One. We will have a 40% ownership; the next-largest owner would have a maximum of 10%. Key decisions require a two-thirds vote. We will have 40%, and key decisions require a two-thirds vote. We are protecting ratepayers, and we are protecting taxpayers.

Speaker, we are looking to—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Order.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): And now I'll say it: The member from Windsor—Tecumseh, come to order.

Carry on.

1110

Hon. Deborah Matthews: As I said, Ontario will remain the largest shareholder, with a minimum of 40%. The next highest owner would have a maximum of 10%. Key decisions require a two-thirds vote.

All of Hydro One's officers will be required to reside in Ontario. The Ontario Grid Control Centre—

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Well, Speaker, with Liberal math, this side should be the government side here in the Legislature.

The Liberals have spent nearly \$7 million on high-priced consultants to help them figure out how to sell Hydro One. They paid millions to KPMG, McKinsey, Deloitte, PricewaterhouseCoopers and a company called Feschuk.Reid, which is Paul Martin's old speech writers. But the Premier's office won't even tell us what work these companies did or what information they provided.

Will the Deputy Premier, head of the Treasury Board, make these consultants' reports public so that Ontarians can see what they say about rates, about reliability, about the billions of dollars of lost revenues this province will be facing when you sell off our hydro utility?

Interjections.

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

Deputy Premier.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Speaker, the leader of the third party has said quite proudly that she has no faith in

the private sector. That might explain why they have no faith in her or her party.

We are moving forward to broaden the ownership because we are committed to building infrastructure. I have heard in southwestern Ontario about the importance of Connecting Links. I have heard this at AMO. I am sure you have heard this as well. We are restoring Connecting Links to provide that much-needed relief.

We're building transit. We're building infrastructure. We are increasing service on the GO line. This is exactly the kind of infrastructure investment that this province needs, and we need to bring all our resources available to us in order to make that infrastructure investment.

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The Liberals have hired some of the most expensive accounting firms in Canada. They've hired a management consulting firm that says this about itself: "We're incredibly expensive...." And they hired Paul Martins's speech writers. Selling Hydro One is really good for Bay Street and apparently it's great for consultants, but it's absolutely the wrong thing for Ontarians.

The Deputy Premier says there is no money for health care; there is no money for education; there is no money for child care. Can the Deputy Premier really justify spending \$7 million on high-priced consultants to help the Liberals sell Hydro One? Really? When will this Premier and this Liberal government actually get its priorities straight?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Well, Speaker, we actually have a lot of faith in the potential of Hydro One. We think that, with this restructured system and with the incentives to get LDCs to come together, we will have a more efficient electricity system. That will take pressure off rate increases.

We have been open and transparent about this, contrary to what the leader of the third party says. In fact, included in the 2014 Liberal platform, the 2014 Ontario budget included reference to maximizing assets. Whether she knows it or not, she ran on that plan too. In October—

Interjections.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Yes, actually, you did.

In October, the advisory council released their interim report. The final report was made public before the budget. We've been debating this issue in the House for months. That will continue. Proposed legislation will be subject to public hearings and debate.

We believe this is the right thing to do because Ontario needs the investment in infrastructure, and they need it now.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): In case you didn't catch on, I was stopping the bantering going back and forth, and I'll wait for it to finish before we carry on with question period.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Oh, no, it's going both ways.

TEACHERS' LABOUR DISPUTE

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: My question today is for the Minister of Education.

Another day goes by and the minister shirks responsibility. Next week, there will be another 42,000 secondary school students not in the classroom—that's from the Peel board. Yesterday, when interviewed, the minister said, "It's up to the union local" and also "what is the local issue" and "the responsibility of the ... local," all in the span of one sentence. No one is blaming the strikes on the local issues except the minister.

Minister, will you admit right now that students are out of the classrooms because of a dozen years of Liberal mismanagement? Exactly who are you blaming for the mess you are actually in today?

Hon. Liz Sandals: I want to go over the legislation one more time. The legislation—

Mr. John Yakabuski: The buck stops with you, Minister.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Renfrew—I've got to do this officially. The member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke is warned.

Carry on.

Hon. Liz Sandals: The School Boards Collective Bargaining Act describes quite clearly that some issues are to be determined at the central table—generally, issues around money and provincial policy—and that other issues are to be determined at the local table.

The School Boards Collective Bargaining Act also makes it very clear that there can be a central strike on issues that are being negotiated at the central table and there can be a local strike on issues that are being negotiated at a local table.

The locals in seven boards requested local conciliation, and they are local strikes. That's what the law says. That's the process that—

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

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: Minister, your answer today and your comments yesterday shrug off and ignore your responsibility as the Minister of Education.

Next Monday, six days from now, some 80,000 Ontario secondary students will be out of the classroom. On May 10, or just 14 days from now, there's a possibility that 817,000 elementary school students could be out of the classroom. Surely you do not think for one moment that you are not fully responsible for what is happening to the classrooms here in Ontario.

Minister, what are you prepared to do to get our students back in the classroom so that no one loses their school year?

Interjections.

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

Hon. Liz Sandals: My responsibility is to ensure that we get a negotiated central collective agreement, because the government of Ontario, the crown, sits at the central table only. In fact, my responsibility is to make sure we get that negotiated central agreement, and that's exactly what I'm doing: working with the parties from a variety

of unions to work on central—which is a lot better than what they would do, Speaker, because they said they would fire 22,700 education workers. I don't think that's how to solve the problem. I think negotiated collective agreements are how to solve the problem.

PRIVATIZATION OF PUBLIC ASSETS

Ms. Catherine Fife: My question is to the Deputy Premier.

Selling Hydro One will pay for less than 3% of the Liberals' transit and infrastructure promises, but the Premier is doing it anyway, even though she has no mandate and no good reason—although we just heard that Bay Street has already benefited from this plan. She promises the money will go into the Trillium Trust.

While the Premier says one thing, her Harper-style omnibus bill says something completely different. The money from the sale of Hydro One is going directly into consolidated revenues. There's nothing in the budget bill that says this money must be spent on infrastructure.

Are the Liberals are just trying to spin Ontarians so that they'll buy into this misguided scheme to sell off Hydro One?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Speaker, I'm afraid that the member opposite is misinformed because, of the \$9 billion estimated for the sale of part of Hydro One, approximately \$5 billion will go towards the debt. The book value will go to the debt. The remaining will go into the Trillium Trust, and the Trillium Trust is earmarked for infrastructure projects.

1120

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Catherine Fife: We had our briefing yesterday. Perhaps you should read this budget book because the Trillium Trust Act is key, obviously, to the Premier's asset sale plan, yet the Premier's budget provided no guarantee that the money from the sale of Hydro One will actually go to transit. It looks like the Premier is creating a loophole so that the money doesn't have to go into the Trillium Trust. Who knows where this money will end up?

If their own budget doesn't put money directly into the Trillium Trust, why is the Liberal government trying to spin Ontarians about needing to sell off Hydro One?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I think what the member opposite is failing to make is the connection between investments in infrastructure and transit, and the need to maximize the value of our assets. They are directly linked. The evidence of that is in the projects that we are moving forward with.

I do believe the member opposite knows that her community—the mayors and the regional chair from Kitchener-Waterloo—have advocated very strongly for enhanced infrastructure investments. That money isn't going to come out of thin air. There is no pixie dust. When you build infrastructure, you have to pay for it. We're figuring out how to pay for it so we can build it, because people need it and they need it now.

YOUTH SERVICES

Mr. Peter Z. Milczyn: My question is for the Minister of Children and Youth Services. Last week in the budget, the crux of the budget was about building up Ontario and building up the people of Ontario. When I listened to the Minister of Finance stand in the House and announce \$250 million over the next two years to continue funding Ontario's Youth Jobs Strategy, it was a clear statement of this government's commitment to invest in the talent and skills of Ontario's youth. I'm very proud to be part of a government that continues to invest in our young people and their minds, and nurtures and encourages them.

Many of the young minds we venture to support come from at-risk communities, where it can be much easier to miss opportunities for a brighter and more prosperous future.

Mr. Speaker, through you to the minister, can she provide some insight as to what the government is doing to support these youth in reaching their full potential?

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: I want to thank the member from Etobicoke-Lakeshore for a great question, a very important question.

Our budget clearly has focused on building up Ontario's youth. Our historic and future investments in the youth jobs strategy will continue to help Ontario's young people secure important job opportunities; however, there are many at-risk youth in our province. I was very happy that we've taken action to broaden and enhance the work we began under the youth action plan.

In this budget we are expanding the youth action plan with \$14 million this year alone and ramping up to \$20 million in 2016-17. We'll be investing in community-oriented programs to reduce the root cause of violence. Our youth outreach workers—a great program—will build relationships with at-risk youth in the middle years throughout our entire province. It is going to be a great continued investment to help all of our youth succeed.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Peter Z. Milczyn: I want to thank the minister for her answer and all the encouraging news about how we continue to support and bolster the success of at-risk youth in Ontario.

I can see the results of these programs in my own riding of Etobicoke-Lakeshore. Through the Youth Opportunities Fund, the peer mentorship project at the Franklin Horner Community Centre is providing a variety of activities to help youth overcome barriers that might prevent them from reaching their full potential. These programs include team sports, painting, sculpting, cooking, dance classes—all taught with positive role models to help our at-risk youth.

Can the minister please share with this House how our new investments will build upon and intensify the success we've already realized from the initial youth action fund?

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: The new investments in our budget really build on the work that was started by my colleague, the Honourable Dr. Eric Hoskins, when he

was at children and youth services. I want to acknowledge the work he started in 2012.

Since then we've created over 27,000 youth opportunities, and our violent crime rate has decreased by 30% since 2003, so Ontario now has the second-lowest youth violent crime rate in the country.

We invested in employment and training programs like the Youth in Policing Initiative, to give opportunity to youth to thrive through great programs, arts programs and sports.

We've done all of this under the first youth action plan, and because of it, we will have more youth on a good path to adulthood. I look forward to continuing this legacy.

HYDRO RATES

Mr. John Yakabuski: My question is for the Minister of Energy. Minister, we've warned you of the suffering that you've inflicted through your reckless hydro policies. Our offices have been inundated with messages from residential and commercial ratepayers, who have no idea how they'll deal with the ever-increasing energy burden you've laid upon them.

To make matters worse, on Friday, rates are going up a staggering 15%. That's 15% on electricity that was already way too high.

Skyrocketing rates are an enormous drain on manufacturing and small businesses. They kill jobs and send them to other jurisdictions. Yet you're still bent on signing expensive energy contracts for intermittent, unreliable power.

Minister, will you stop doubling down on your failed energy experiments and enact a consumers-first energy plan that protects Ontario hydro ratepayers?

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: I appreciate the questions that I get from my Conservative critic. He's often bombastic, and he often has a very different interpretation of reality.

The announcement that was made by the Ontario Energy Boards was not 15%. What he really fails to appreciate is that when he says that we have the highest electricity prices—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I believe the member would really like to be able to ask his supplementary. Finish, please.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: When he says we have the highest electricity prices in Canada, he's wrong. When he says we have the highest prices in North America, he's wrong. We have invested \$34 billion in this system to make it reliable, after they ran it into the dump—

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

Mr. John Yakabuski: Surprisingly, Mr. Speaker, we're going to disagree.

Minister, once the new rates come into effect this Friday, Ontario will have the highest electricity rates in Canada. That's right. We're now surpassing that industrial powerhouse, Prince Edward Island, in having the most uncompetitive rates in the country.

Your arrogant mismanagement of the hydro system has real-world consequences. Just ask the people of Napanee, who are losing out to Mexico with Goodyear's new multi-million-dollar planned expansion.

Minister, Ontarians cannot afford your hydro increases, due to your expensive energy experiments. Will you stand up now and begin to reverse the damage you're inflicting on Ontarians?

Interjections.

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

Minister.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: He alluded to the Green Energy Act and the renewables that we're dealing with in terms of experiments. Well, I have a quote here, and it's from the critic from Nipissing—

Mr. Victor Fedeli: He was alluding to the 15% increase.

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

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: "Taking advantage of locally available green power resources is a good fit with the long-range development strategy we have for the community. I am particularly pleased with the relationship we have struck with West Wind Development Inc. for the first half of the project. I am confident that the company's reputation as a responsible wind power developer"—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Excuse me—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The deputy House leader is warned, and the member from Nipissing will come to order—second time.

Carry on.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: —the member from Nipissing says, will "put North Bay 'on the map' as a showcase for the sensitive and responsible development of this great renewable energy source."

He is a great endorser—

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Too bad you didn't warn us about the cost.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. You're finished.

The member from Nipissing is warned.

New question.

PRIVATIZATION OF PUBLIC ASSETS

Mr. Peter Tabuns: My question is to the Deputy Premier. The budget act says this in section 7 of schedule 9: "If, at any time ... the number of common shares of Hydro One ... owned by the minister ... ceases to be greater than 10% of the outstanding common shares of Hydro One ... from that time ... share ownership restrictions ... apply to the minister...."

1130

Speaker, the Premier is promising that the province will own 40% of Hydro One, so why is she making plans for Ontario to hold less than 10% of Hydro One?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I can assure the people of this province, Speaker, that the government will hold a minimum of 40% of the shares. The next—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Hamilton East–Stoney Creek will come to order; that's the second time. The member from Essex, come to order; that's the second time.

Carry on.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Speaker, we are introducing legislation that would mean the government cannot own less than 40% of Hydro One shares. No other shareholder would be allowed to own more than 10%. Key decisions require a two-thirds vote, and we will own a minimum of 40%. We will retain that important control. All of Hydro One's officers would be required to reside in Ontario, head office—

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

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Well, it's clear the Deputy Premier needs a briefing from her finance officials.

The Premier keeps insisting that she's only going to sell 60% of Hydro One, but yesterday we learned there is nothing to prevent the public ownership from getting diluted far beyond 40%.

When the Premier first won her seat, the Ontario Liberals were committed to keeping hydro in public hands. Now she's planning to sell 60%. What's to stop her from selling 70%, 80%, 90% or even more?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Minister of Finance.

Hon. Charles Sousa: Speaker, it is critical for us to put in legislation the parameters by which to protect the public interest. We have said all along that Ontarians will have at least 40% ownership of Hydro One.

But the point being made here is the fact that Hydro One may become a growth company. In fact, we hope it will be, so we can access even greater dividends for the benefit of the public, and in so doing, we have to protect the interests of the public by ensuring that we always retain that 40%.

We will work collaboratively to ensure that no one or group of shareholders can have more than 10% ownership of Hydro One, and we will continue to do that. Legislation will be required to enforce that. We'll work together with all members of this House, who should be supportive of this for the benefit of the people of Ontario.

ONTARIO RETIREMENT PENSION PLAN

Mr. Arthur Potts: I'm delighted to have this opportunity to put a question to the Associate Minister of Finance.

I know that retirement security is top of mind for many Ontarians all across the province. Certainly my constituents in Beaches–East York, particularly those in their twenties and thirties, are particularly concerned that they do not have access to a workplace pension plan, and they are concerned about their future. They are concerned that they will not be able to maintain a reasonable

standard of living during their retirement. In fact, many have even told me they're concerned that they will never have the luxury of being able to retire.

That's why they are all thrilled now to see that our government is moving ahead with the creation of the Ontario Retirement Pension Plan. Just last week, I was pleased to see that the budget outlined important progress that we were making toward implementing that plan.

Speaker, through you, will the minister please provide us with details about the steps the government is taking to move forward with the implementation of the important plan?

Hon. Mitzie Hunter: I want to thank the member from Beaches–East York for that very important question.

Mr. Speaker, last week's budget announced an important next step for our government in taking the enhancement of the retirement security of millions of Ontarians and moving that forward. Our government is introducing legislation to establish the Ontario Retirement Pension Plan Administration Corp. This entity will be responsible for administering the ORPP. It will be a professional, independent pension organization.

Ontario is a global leader in pension administration and management. The pension plans such as teachers' and HOOPP are recognized as top performers internationally. The Economist called Ontario plans "maple revolutionaries."

Mr. Speaker, we're leveraging the skill and the expertise of Ontario's considerable pension experts as we move forward with implementing the ORPP.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Arthur Potts: Thank you to the minister for that very intelligent response. I know constituents in my riding will be glad to hear that our government is moving forward with setting up the body to administer this important pension plan.

The businesses in my riding have emphasized the importance of creating an administrative structure that is simple, efficient and effective. I'm very glad to see that our government is doing just that. I'm also pleased to learn that our government is able to capitalize on the skills and expertise of pension experts right here in the province of Ontario. I'll admit that I didn't know that Canadian pension funds, particularly those from Ontario, were held in such high regard on the international stage.

Hon. Jeff Leal: Hong Kong.

Mr. Arthur Potts: Particularly in Hong Kong. Thank you, Minister.

Mr. Speaker, again, through you to the Associate Minister of Finance, would you please outline to the members of this House the reasons why our pension funds have been so successful and how the government is drawing on this expertise?

Hon. Mitzie Hunter: I want to thank the member for this very important question. I know how hard he's working on behalf of his constituents.

Experts have attributed the success of these plans to several important features. These plans have strong and

independent governance structures. They have the ability to attract the right talent with investment and pension administrative expertise, and they have the scale necessary to achieve high performance in a low-cost, efficient way.

The New York Times recently stated that “lower management costs, freedom from political meddling and non-existent funding shortfalls ... is a model that has moved the major Canadian pension plans largely out of government debt in search of higher returns.”

We’re also working with pension experts on our technical advisory panel to incorporate these key attributes into the design of the administrative corporation. Leveraging this expertise will enable us to create the best possible benefits for the people of Ontario.

MINING INDUSTRY

Mr. Norm Miller: My question is to the Minister of Northern Development and Mines. Minister, the Fraser Institute Annual Survey of Mining Companies suggests that Ontario is heading in the wrong direction. In the investment attractiveness index, Ontario fell nine places to 23rd in the world. The report pointed to “complete incomprehensibility” and “impractical regulation,” among other issues in the changes to the Ontario Mining Act.

Minister, can you explain why Ontario fell nine spots in a single year in the Fraser Institute’s survey of mining companies under your watch?

Hon. Michael Gravelle: Certainly we’re interested in the survey done by the Fraser Institute, as we are by everyone else that is watching the mining industry so closely. But the important good news, and the news that we need to be talking about, is the fact that Ontario continues to be the top jurisdiction for exploration in the entire country. Ontario continues to be the top jurisdiction, in terms of mineral production—over \$11 billion in 2014, \$5.7 billion about 10 years ago; that has gone up—and in terms of exploration, over \$500 million.

We are continuing to move forward with the opening up of new mines all across the province. I think the member knows well about the Phoenix Gold project that Rubicon, in terms of the Red Lake area—the expansion of the Goldcorp facility in Cochenour, and the new gold opportunity we’re seeing in Fort Frances. The long and short of it is, there’s great news going forward in the mining sector, and we’re very excited about it.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Norm Miller: Minister, the Fraser report is an important measure of confidence in our province—and it’s heading in the wrong direction.

The Fraser Institute isn’t the only organization that has taken notice of your government’s track record on the mining file. The Ontario Chamber of Commerce points to permitting delays in the report on the Ring of Fire. Under the Environmental Assessment Act, EA terms of reference are to be approved or rejected within 12 weeks of submission.

Those terms of reference for Noront’s Eagle’s Nest mine were submitted over two years ago and have still not been ruled on. That’s 133 weeks and counting. Minis-

ter, how can you justify such a delay on a project that is worth over \$60 billion and will create thousands of jobs in northern Ontario?

Hon. Michael Gravelle: I think the member knows well about the exciting opportunities that we have in the Ring of Fire, and certainly one of them is the Noront project, the Eagle’s Nest project. I think, may I say, if the member was speaking to the CEO of Noront Resources, he would be speaking very positively about the very close relationship we have and the work that we are doing together to help advance that project. That project also includes the opportunity we have to work so closely with our First Nations, to make sure that they see benefits to this project as well.

But you’re quite right. The real evidence that we see on the ground are the mining companies themselves.

Yesterday, myself and a number of my colleagues, including the Treasury Board president, the Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry and the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs, spent a great deal of time with key mining executives all across the province. We had a very special day when we talked about those great opportunities, moving forward and the work that we’re going to continue to do to see the mining opportunities in the province continue to develop, creating jobs all across the province.

1140

PAN AM GAMES

Mr. Paul Miller: My question is to the Acting Premier. Two weeks ago, I warned that the Pan Am Games in Hamilton could be at risk. Yesterday, the city of Hamilton said the same. But this government isn’t listening again.

Well, the mayor of Hamilton has now sent the Premier a letter demanding answers: “Key elements of the Hamilton Stadium will not have arrived onsite and be installed until the end of June ... the city’s ability to host the Pan Am Games soccer matches at the new stadium also is in jeopardy.”

The Hamilton stadium was meant to be ready last June. Every week since then has brought another excuse, another reassurance and another empty promise.

Can you personally promise the House that the stadium will be ready? What will you do if it isn’t? And who will the Premier hold accountable for this utter fiasco?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: To the minister responsible for the Pan Am/Parapan Am Games.

Hon. Michael Coteau: I’d like to thank the member for the question. There are 73 more days to go until we welcome the world to Ontario for the largest multi-sport event in the history of this province.

When it comes to our infrastructure, we’re in great shape. We’re \$55.5 million under budget when it comes to our infrastructure. When it comes to corporate Canada, we’ve been able to raise \$170 million from corporate sponsorship. We have 60,000 people who have offered to help, and the highest per capita coming from Hamilton.

In fact, when it comes to Hamilton, the flame cauldron that is going to be used will be using Hamilton steel.

The soccer matches that are going to be held in Hamilton are one of our best-sold tickets. We've been able to sell 350,000 tickets so far.

The people of Hamilton are on board, the people of Ontario are on board, and we're quite—

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

Mr. Paul Miller: Even though he didn't answer the question, I guess the mayor of Hamilton disagrees with you: "The continued public communication of the May 8th substantial completion date creates false expectations ... after ONSS delivers a substantially completed stadium, the sponsors need to complete additional construction work and training in advance of any events taking place" in Hamilton.

We have also learned that they've somehow managed to build 700 seats without a view of the field—a fitting monument to this government's blindness and management.

Yesterday, three reporters tried to get answers from the contractor and from Infrastructure Ontario, an agency of this government, about the delays. They were told that any facts on the delays were commercial issues and confidential. The refusal of a public agency to answer these questions is simply outrageous.

Deputy Premier, since Infrastructure Ontario won't give a straight answer to the people of Ontario, will you give us one today?

Hon. Michael Coteau: I think the member opposite needs to check in with his city hall, because the city of Hamilton issued an occupancy permit for the stadium on April 16. I'm quite proud of the fact that we're able to move forward, and this is one of the best milestones we've reached in the Hamilton stadium. So thank you very much for the question and thank you to the member for providing me with an opportunity to—

Mr. Paul Miller: Utter baloney.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Hamilton East–Stoney Creek is warned.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): And whoever was starting that will get one too.

One wrap-up.

Hon. Michael Coteau: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The simple fact is, this is the largest investment in sport infrastructure in the history of this province, and we are proud of our record.

NORTHERN ECONOMY

Mr. Grant Crack: My question this morning is to the Minister of Northern Development and Mines. I am particularly proud of our government's recently announced 2015 budget. We have continued to deliver on our commitment to follow our path to balance, while continuing to invest in what's important to Ontarians.

In the 2014 budget, we introduced the province's economic plan. Now, in the 2015 budget, we have demon-

strated the significant progress that has been made on that plan to date. Job creation and economic development is a key part of our plan of building Ontario up. This includes our province's largest cities, our province's small and rural communities such as Glengarry–Prescott–Russell, and our province's northern regions.

Mr. Speaker, through you to the minister, can the minister please explain how this year's budgeted investments will ensure a robust northern economy in Ontario?

Hon. Michael Gravelle: Thanks to the member for Glengarry–Prescott–Russell for that great question. Just this past week I attended the Northwestern Ontario Municipal Association along with my colleagues, the Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry, the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs and my parliamentary assistant. We spoke about the incredible investments in this year's budget that are obviously having a great impact in the north.

It's not hard to find examples. First of all, and this is huge, we've committed to a permanent Northern Industrial Electricity Rate Program with continued investment up to \$120 million per year to assist with the unique challenges facing major resource-based industries in the north, and that is huge.

We're investing in roads, highways and bridges, with about \$15 billion in the Moving Ontario Forward plan for projects like the four-laning between Thunder Bay and Nipigon, the four-laning of Highway 69 and many other important projects in northern Ontario that we're excited about.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Grant Crack: I'd like to thank the Minister of Northern Development and Mines for that answer.

Our government believes that when we invest, we grow; and when we build, we grow. This approach significantly contrasts with the recent federal budget that once again shortchanges Ontarians.

Our government is supporting a dynamic and innovative business climate across this province, but the federal government is certainly not investing to the extent that Ontarians expect and need, particularly in small, rural and northern communities.

Speaker, through you, will the minister please explain how we plan to move forward on some of our province's largest economic opportunities, like the amazing Ring of Fire project, in the absence of federal leadership?

Hon. Michael Gravelle: The Ring of Fire indeed is an extraordinary economic development opportunity. I'm very excited about the fact that we have recommitted our one billion in provincial infrastructure dollars. What is alarming is that indeed there's still no support from the federal government coming forward.

In the federal budget last week, two days before our budget, there was no mention of any infrastructure funding for the Ring of Fire. May I say, when northern members of the Harper government say—I will quote one of the members—that the Ring of Fire is "not a priority for the government because it is not a priority for the private sector," boy do they have it wrong. We heard examples of that even in the House today.

The private sector and First Nations need to know that the federal government will be an active partner and is committed to moving forward with the promise of realizing this—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Answer.

Hon. Michael Gravelle:—sustainable development of this great, exciting economic development—

Interjections.

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

Hon. Michael Gravelle:—for all of Canada.

ONTARIO RETIREMENT PENSION PLAN

Mrs. Julia Munro: My question is to the Acting Premier. Ontario can't afford your pension scheme. Your plan to reach into the pockets of Ontario employed people to remove 1.9% is in fact a job-killer plan. Your own ministry officials predict your plan will kill jobs.

Why do you continue to ignore the evidence provided by experts in the ministry, the CFIB, all the chambers of commerce and others?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: The Associate Minister of Finance responsible for the Ontario Retirement Pension Plan.

Hon. Mitzie Hunter: I want to thank the member for this question. I think the member knows full well that the numbers she's referring to have nothing to do with this plan whatsoever. It is referring to a study that was done regarding transit and revenue tools that was rejected by our government.

In fact, when we look at what economists are saying about the impact of pension plans and a supplemental plan like the ORPP on Ontario's economy, they're saying that it is actually good for Ontario's economy.

David Dodge has said that in fact when we look at the long-term structural impact of the supplemental plan, it will actually advance Ontario's economy in key ways. It will boost productivity. It would boost investments in our economy, in companies. It will also—

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

Mrs. Julia Munro: Back to the Acting Premier: Not only does your pension scheme pick the pockets of the employed, it snatches another 1.9% from all the Businesses. Businesses pay taxes and create jobs, but only when they make a profit. You are destroying that balance. Why are you making Ontario uncompetitive? Why are you driving business away from Ontario?

Hon. Mitzie Hunter: The member opposite is simply wrong. In fact, just this morning I was with a number of businesses from across the GTHA at the CivicAction boot camp. In fact, if we do not invest in the future of this province, that is going to be hurtful to businesses.

When we look at pension coverage in this province, it is incredibly low, but when we look at the next generation of retirees, those future retirees, we have to be concerned. Some 75% of workers between the ages of 25 and 34 have no workplace-based pension plan. We have to take action today to ensure that when they retire, they

can retire with security, and that they can continue to consume and participate in Ontario's economy. That's good for business, that's good for people and that's good for Ontario's economy.

What we are doing—

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

HOME CARE

Mr. Wayne Gates: My question is to the Minister of Health. Mr. Speaker, as you know, in Niagara the in-home care nurses in Niagara have been on strike for a number of weeks. Their employer, the private company CarePartners, has not bargained their first agreement, and no one has been able to settle this at the bargaining table.

The owner of CarePartners is earning several hundred thousand dollars per year of taxpayers' money.

I met with patients over the weekend who told me their gut-wrenching stories about the lack of care they're now receiving.

Mr. Speaker, as minister responsible for providing health care in this province, can he explain to me why CarePartners is still receiving referrals from the local CCAC?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: I appreciate the member opposite raising this. We had an opportunity to speak yesterday about this issue. I know we do agree that patients in this province want to and they deserve to receive the highest quality of care in their homes, in their community, and at an appropriate venue.

There is a dispute between an employer and the employees, as the member opposite has referenced. As the minister—as a government, we encourage both parties to get back to the negotiating table.

The CCAC that's responsible, as they should be, for providing that quality of care is not the employer in this case. It is not involved in these negotiations.

I also understand that Ministry of Labour mediators are available to both parties should they so desire. I would encourage both parties to get back to the negotiating table. I expect our CCACs to ensure that that quality of care is provided to all clients within that catchment area.

DEFERRED VOTES

ONTARIO SOCIETY
FOR THE PREVENTION
OF CRUELTY TO ANIMALS
AMENDMENT ACT, 2015
LOI DE 2015 MODIFIANT
LA LOI SUR LA SOCIÉTÉ
DE PROTECTION DES ANIMAUX
DE L'ONTARIO

Deferred vote on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

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 / Projet de loi 80, Loi modifiant la Loi sur la Société de protection des animaux de l'Ontario et la Loi sur les animaux destinés à la recherche en ce qui concerne la possession et l'élevage d'épaulards ainsi que les exigences administratives relatives aux soins dispensés aux animaux.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1154 to 1159.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Would all members please take their seats? All members take their seats, please.

On March 31, 2015, Mr. Naqvi moved second reading of Bill 80. All those in favour, please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Albanese, Laura	Hatfield, Percy	Milczyn, Peter Z.
Anderson, Granville	Hoggarth, Ann	Miller, Paul
Armstrong, Teresa J.	Horwath, Andrea	Naidoo-Harris, Indira
Baker, Yvan	Hoskins, Eric	Naqvi, Yasir
Ballard, Chris	Hunter, Mitzie	Natyshak, Taras
Berardinetti, Lorenzo	Jaczek, Helena	Orazietti, David
Bisson, Gilles	Kiwala, Sophie	Potts, Arthur
Bradley, James J.	Kwinter, Monte	Qaadri, Shafiq
Chiarelli, Bob	Lalonde, Marie-France	Rinaldi, Lou
Colle, Mike	Leal, Jeff	Sandals, Liz
Coteau, Michael	MacCharles, Tracy	Sergio, Mario
Crack, Grant	Malhi, Harinder	Sousa, Charles
Damerla, Dipika	Mangat, Amrit	Tabuns, Peter
Del Duca, Steven	Mantha, Michael	Takhar, Harinder S.
Dhillon, Vic	Martins, Cristina	Thibeault, Glenn
Dong, Han	Matthews, Deborah	Vanthof, John
Fife, Catherine	Mauro, Bill	Vernile, Daiene
Flynn, Kevin Daniel	McGarry, Kathryn	Wong, Soo
Fraser, John	McMahon, Eleanor	Wynne, Kathleen O.
Gravelle, Michael	McMeekin, Ted	Zimmer, David
Gretzky, Lisa	Meilleur, Madeleine	

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

Nays

Bailey, Robert	Jones, Sylvia	Smith, Todd
Barrett, Toby	MacLeod, Lisa	Thompson, Lisa M.
Clark, Steve	Martow, Gila	Walker, Bill
Dunlop, Garfield	McDonnell, Jim	Wilson, Jim
Fedeli, Victor	Miller, Norm	Yakabuski, John
Hardeman, Ernie	Munro, Julia	Yurek, Jeff
Harris, Michael	Nicholls, Rick	
Hudak, Tim	Scott, Laurie	

The Deputy Clerk (Mr. Todd Decker): The ayes are 62; the nays are 22.

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

Second reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Pursuant to the order of the House dated April 22, 2015, the bill is ordered referred to the Standing Committee on Social Policy.

VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): A point of order, the member from Beaches–East York.

Mr. Arthur Potts: During proceedings, two constituents of mine came into the House: Alec Tuck and his wonderful mother, Ann Marie Brown. I just wanted to welcome them to the House.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): A point of order, the member from Algoma–Manitoulin.

Mr. Michael Mantha: Today being April 28, the Day of Mourning, it's also my son's birthday at home. He's in a classroom right now. I want to wish him a very happy birthday: Roch Mantha.

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

The House recessed from 1203 to 1500.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Han Dong: I think I have a few guests here from my local university, OCAD. They're here in the House somewhere so I just want to welcome them. I'll make a statement later on about them too.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

NATIONAL IMMUNIZATION AWARENESS WEEK

Mr. Bill Walker: April 26 marked the beginning of National Immunization Awareness Week in Canada and I wanted to take a moment to bring attention to this important event. Immunization has been heralded as one of the greatest achievements in public health of the 20th century. It has resulted in the control, eradication or near elimination of numerous infectious diseases and saved more Canadian lives over the past 50 years than any other health intervention. Yet, despite these tremendous scientific advances, we are seeing preventable illnesses making the news in record numbers.

As a society we have taken for granted the impact vaccines have had on our daily lives. Because we are not witnessing first-hand the effects of these diseases, we have forgotten their debilitating and sometimes lethal impact. We have forgotten what the pain and suffering looks like and that is because, when immunization programs work well, we forget that they are working at all.

Vaccines are designed to protect the young, the old, the vulnerable and everyone in between. And in an age when health care centres on acute and chronic treatment, immunization allows us to flip the paradigm, protecting people before they become patients.

Thanks to vaccines, it is almost unheard of that a child will die in Canada of smallpox, diphtheria or bacterial meningitis. Thanks to vaccines, our hospitals no longer

need to treat the devastating effects of polio with iron lungs. Thanks to vaccines, we can protect our seniors against shingles and pneumonia. It is one of the best health measures that you can take to protect yourself and your loved ones from disease and illness, and a cost-effective public health measure that reduces the burden on Ontario's health system through fewer hospital admissions and reduced medical care expenses.

During National Immunization Awareness Week I ask of you, instead of forgetting the past, let's remember it and work towards improving our future. As such, I respectfully remind all members of the House to keep up to date with their immunizations.

AN INSTRUMENT FOR EVERY CHILD

Mr. Paul Miller: I rise today to recognize An Instrument for Every Child, an outstanding cultural initiative that enriches the children of my home city of Hamilton.

The Hamilton Music Collective is a charitable organization formed in 2008 by local educators, business owners and performers who share an interest in music, their community and, in particular, our youth and children. It launched An Instrument for Every Child in 2009 in collaboration with the Hamilton Philharmonic Orchestra and the Hamilton–Wentworth District School Board.

The program provides elementary school children in Hamilton's inner-city schools and challenged neighbourhoods with the opportunity to learn to play an instrument, participate in musical groups and receive free musical instruction on a weekly basis. It serves children who demonstrate a desire to learn music and inspires children at risk to realize their full potential as students, musicians and citizens.

Since its inception, the program has received tremendous support from within the Hamilton community as well as on a regional level. It could be a model for other communities on how to bring music education into inner-city schools and community centres by maximizing partnerships between local organizations, school boards, Boys and Girls Clubs and local businesses.

I have asked members of the cabinet to study provincial support for An Instrument for Every Child in order to ensure its future sustainability and the continued enrichment of the lives of our children.

To all of the participants and volunteers in this program, thank you for the wonderful work you do.

BURLINGTON TEEN TOUR BAND

Ms. Eleanor McMahon: I'm pleased to rise in this House today to tell you about the pride of Burlington, our Teen Tour Band, Canada's oldest and largest youth marching band. From its beginnings in 1947, when 75 girls and boys gave their first performance, the Burlington Teen Tour Band has since travelled the world representing Canada and racking up an impressive number of awards along the way.

The band has performed for heads of state and royalty as well as on television, in movies and at prestigious events such as the Rose Bowl parade and the 70th anniversary of Pearl Harbor, to name a few.

Just recently, on April 12, I had the privilege of watching the band perform in Burlington to commemorate the 70th anniversary of the liberation of the Netherlands by Canadian Forces, and the 10th anniversary of the twinning of the city of Burlington and the city of Apeldoorn.

From May 1 to 12, the Teen Tour Band will tour the Netherlands representing Canadian youth to commemorate the liberation anniversary. Highlights include the Thank You Canadian Veterans parade in Wageningen, where the Dutch royal family will be in attendance; an evening concert for the opening of the Burlington Park in Apeldoorn; a veterans' parade in Apeldoorn; and a concert with the Royal Dutch Air Force Band. The Teen Tour Band members will also have the opportunity to speak with Dutch high school students who are caretakers of Canadian war graves, and they will meet with adults who were teenagers themselves at the time of liberation.

I would like to congratulate the Teen Tour Band and their boosters, parents and supporters who work tirelessly to support them, and wish them all the very best for their upcoming trip to the Netherlands.

GODERICH TO GUELPH RAIL TRAIL

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: I'm pleased to share with the House some good news coming out of my riding of Huron–Bruce. This July, after 25 years of hard work and community planning, the Goderich to Guelph Rail Trail will be officially opening. The Goderich to Guelph Rail Trail, otherwise known as the G2G Rail Trail, runs along the former CPR railway on land that stretches over 127 kilometres between Guelph and Goderich.

The G2G Rail Trail project was formed by volunteers and an advisory committee that stepped up about five years ago to make it happen. They took plans that were drafted over 25 years ago to work together to complete the G2G.

There is huge support around the community for this project. A number of steward groups and stakeholder groups throughout my riding, and the 13 communities along the trail, have been an asset to its completion.

The group is calling this project an iconic integration between rural and urban Ontario, and it has also been referred to as "the backbone of Ontario trails." The entire stretch is approximately 137 kilometres and will preserve a green space of about five square kilometres, which is actually larger, Speaker, than downtown Toronto.

I would like to close by thanking all the volunteers who made this trail happen after 25 years. The G2G may be the backbone of Ontario trails, but it's these volunteers who are the backbone of our communities. Projects like this would never happen without them.

The G2G Rail Trail is an incredible community project, and I can't wait to see what else they have in store.

ONTARIO WOOD

Mr. Gilles Bisson: To the members of this House, most of you will know that there's been a lot of sawmills and paper mills and others that have closed down across northern Ontario over the last number of years. But the thing that is really starting to frustrate people to the largest degree is when you see a mill like what we saw in Iroquois Falls and Smooth Rock Falls close its doors—but what you now see is truckload after truckload after truckload of wood cut in Ontario forests, both poplar and conifer, and transferring it into the province of Quebec for processing.

It is a very bad policy. Our policy should be that wood that is cut in Ontario should be processed through Ontario mills. If there need to be wood exchanges—because those have existed for many years, where mills across the border exchange fibre, because there are some fibre exchanges that do make some sense, but they're essentially equal when it comes to the amount of wood being used—that is not a bad thing, and nobody will stand in the way of it.

But imagine how the community feels in Iroquois Falls and in Cochrane where they've seen their mills go down, and there's between 600 to 1,000 loads of poplar and conifer that are being shipped out to the province of Quebec from those particular forests at the same time that we have mills like Little John Enterprises, which is trying to get certainty on wood when it comes to poplar so that he can operate his mill. Imagine how they feel when they see the wood that could be feeding their mill being transferred over to Quebec and not given an opportunity to add value here in the province of Ontario.

I call on the government to stop this practice.

OCAD UNIVERSITY

Mr. Han Dong: I rise today to recognize and to congratulate OCAD University on their 100th annual Graduate Exhibition, which runs from April 29 to May 3 of this year. Over the five-day exhibit, approximately 25,000 guests will view the final thesis work of more than 900 promising young artists and designers.

The university, which was founded in 1876, boasts a beautiful, well-organized, inspiring campus that continues to attract the best talent from across Ontario and Canada. It makes me very proud every time I walk by Grange Park and look up at the Sharp Centre for Design.

1510

OCAD has a long-standing reputation as a premier destination for arts and design students in Ontario. We are very fortunate to house it and its talented staff and students in the riding of Trinity–Spadina.

To celebrate this tremendous milestone, I invite all members of this Legislature, as well as all members of my community, to visit this historic exhibit and experience the fantastic work of OCAD University students.

Thank you to the members of OCAD for being in the gallery today, and again, congratulations on your historic 100th annual graduate exhibit.

HOCKEY

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to seek unanimous consent to use a prop.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock, please. The member from Nepean–Carleton is seeking unanimous consent to use a prop during her statement. Do we agree? Agreed.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm being publicly shamed today because my wonderful Ottawa Senators lost to the Montreal Canadiens on Saturday. As a result, I made a commitment to my dear friend Jean Rousselle, who is a member of the National Assembly in Quebec, to wear a Montreal Canadiens sweater in the Legislature and deliver a statement, if they lost.

Now, this being Toronto, where they aspire to have an NHL team, they do not actually have any NHL jerseys in this city—either for the Senators or Montreal Canadiens—so it is up to my dear friend the House leader for the government to initial this beautiful, handwritten prop. Of course, I would also like to say thank you to the traitorous member from Timiskaming–Cochrane, who also thinks it was okay because he is a Montreal Canadiens fan.

That said, this place has many heavy moments, but today I think we can all get behind a Canadian team and encourage them to win the Stanley Cup. If my Ottawa Senators can't do it, then, go, Habs, go!

ORGAN AND TISSUE DONATION

Ms. Daiene Vernile: This past weekend, in my community, I was happy to support the fourth annual Transplant Trot, a fundraising event for the Canadian Transplant Association. On Saturday morning, at Waterloo Park, supporters of organ and tissue donations gathered for an annual run and walk to raise funds and awareness. Similar runs were planned in 10 other cities across Canada.

Currently in Ontario, there are more than 1,500 people who are waiting for organ and tissue transplants so that they may have a second chance at life. Although there are 11.8 million of us in this province who are eligible, only 3.1 million have bothered to register—that's 26% of our population. I think that we can do better.

I met a number of people whose lives have been changed and saved by organ donations. Recipients of heart, lung, kidney and liver transplants are thriving today because others have generously given this gift of continued life.

I also met Julie from the town of Conestogo. Four years ago while she was driving with her 11-year-old daughter in their car, they were hit by a drunk driver. Although Julie survived, her daughter did not. Julie made the decision to donate her child's organs.

Julie and the other people at Saturday's event encourage all of us to register as organ donors. It's as easy as going to beadonor.ca. What only takes a few minutes of your time could mean years of life for a person in need.

ROTARY YOUTH AWARDS
 PRIX RECONNAISSANCE
 JEUNESSE DU CLUB ROTARY

Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde: On April 19, I was pleased to be part of the Rotary youth awards in my community of Orléans. As a Rotarian, and an MPP, it was an absolute pleasure to be in the company of 27 dedicated and talented young people.

Ces jeunes, âgés entre 14 et 29 ans, ont été honorés pour leur engagement communautaire, leur entrepreneuriat, leur talent musical et leur succès académique.

The recipients were nominated by their peers, teachers, mentors and other community members not only for their dedication and passion, but for also embodying the Rotary Four-Way Test, which has to do with trust, fairness, goodwill and their actions being beneficial for all.

I was blown away by how much each of these young people has accomplished or overcome in order to be valuable members of their school and larger communities, like spending countless hours practising dance, singing, acting and playing instruments; volunteering their time to local charities; fundraising an impressive amount for international causes; or taking the time to mentor others to be successful as well.

Félicitations à ces incroyables jeunes.

Their commitment and dedication are impressive and will get them very far.

Ils montrent le chemin à la jeunesse ontarienne.

Our future is in good hands.

Lastly, I would like to thank past president Len Goddard, newly elected president Teresa Whitmore, and other Rotarians who organized this wonderful event.

Merci.

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

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

EMPOWERING HOME
 CARE PATIENTS ACT, 2015
 LOI DE 2015 DONNANT PLUS
 DE POUVOIR AUX PERSONNES
 RECEVANT DES SOINS À DOMICILE

Mrs. Gretzky moved first reading of the following bill: Bill 92, An Act to amend the Home Care and Community Services Act, 1994 with respect to complaints and appeals / Projet de loi 92, Loi modifiant la Loi de 1994 sur les services de soins à domicile et les services communautaires en ce qui concerne les plaintes et les appels.

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

First reading agreed to.

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

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: Under section 39 of the Home Care and Community Services Act, 1994, an approved agency is required to establish a process for reviewing complaints about specified matters.

The bill shortens the time period from 60 days to 30 days during which an agency is required to respond to complaints respecting decisions about the particular community services a person is entitled to receive. The bill requires the agency's response to include information about the process for appealing the decision to the Health Services Appeal and Review Board.

The bill also provides that if the decision of the agency would have the effect of terminating or reducing the community services provided to a person, an appeal to the Health Services Appeal and Review Board stays the decision.

MOTIONS

STANDING COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC ACCOUNTS

STANDING COMMITTEE ON THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: I believe you will find that we have unanimous consent to put forward a motion without notice regarding the Standing Committee on Public Accounts and the Standing Committee on the Legislative Assembly.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The government House leader is requesting permission to put forward a motion—

Mr. John Yakabuski: Agreed.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): —without notice. Do we agree? Agreed.

I've got to get it out first.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Anything you ask, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I thought so.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: I move that the Standing Committee on Public Accounts be authorized to attend the annual conference of the Canadian Council of Public Accounts Committees, and the Standing Committee on the Legislative Assembly be authorized to attend the annual meeting of the National Conference of State Legislatures.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Mr. Naqvi moves that the Standing Committee on Public Accounts be authorized to attend the annual conference of the Canadian Council of Public Accounts Committees, and the Standing Committee on the Legislative Assembly be authorized to attend the annual meeting of the National Conference of State Legislatures. Do we agree? Agreed. Carried.

Motion agreed to.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

FIRST RESPONDERS

PREMIERS INTERVENANTS

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: First responders provide emergency and often life-saving services in times of crisis. Every day, our first responders put their lives on the line to protect us, our friends, our families, neighbours, communities and, of course, loved ones. They are there when we need them most and look after us in our time of need.

We are always confident that Ontario's first responders are ready at a moment's notice to protect our homes, businesses and our communities. To recognize their ongoing commitment to community safety, the Ontario Legislature proclaimed May 1 of each year as First Responders Day.

It is my great privilege to rise in this House today to recognize and express our gratitude, on behalf of our Premier, our government and the people of Ontario, to our first responders.

1520

Afin de reconnaître leur contribution à la sécurité des collectivités, la législature ontarienne a proclamé le 1^{er} mai jour des premiers répondants. Il s'agit d'un grand privilège pour moi de m'adresser à cette Chambre et d'exprimer notre gratitude, ainsi que celle de la première ministre, de notre gouvernement et de la population ontarienne, envers les premiers répondants.

This includes police officers, firefighters, military personnel, paramedics, medical evacuation pilots, dispatchers, nurses, doctors and emergency managers. It also includes the many volunteers and professionals who dedicate their careers to the service of others.

Emergency service providers are important members of our communities. They are also our neighbours, relatives and friends. Whether they are on the other end of the line when someone calls 911, help a heart attack victim or put their life on the line in defence of our country, these men and women bring professionalism, calm, and a helping hand in the greatest hour of need. Answering the call to keep the rest of us safe is not just something they do; it is a reflection of who they are.

I think it is also extremely important to recognize the correctional staff both inside and outside our institutions who play a key role in keeping our communities safe.

Il est très important aussi de reconnaître la contribution du personnel de nos institutions correctionnelles, à l'interne ou à l'externe, qui contribuent eux aussi à la sécurité de nos collectivités.

Ontario's correctional officers, institution staff and supervisors, nurses, doctors, mental health workers, probation and parole officers, and all the other dedicated professionals work every day to uphold public safety and keep our communities safe.

Emergency service providers help people in times of crisis, but we also want to recognize their volunteer

work, which helps strengthen our communities. From charity events, toy drives, community car washes and coaching little league, our first responders are a positive example for our youth and to everyone in our communities.

We know that Ontario families and communities are safer thanks to the dedication of our first responders, who are there to help us when we need them most.

I also want to recognize the sacrifice of their families, their partners, their mothers and fathers and their children. Thank you for sharing your loved ones with us.

Speaker, we must take the opportunity to pay our respects to those who have lost their lives in service to our communities. Working with firefighters and police, we created an annual tribute to honour those who have died in the line of duty. This weekend, the Ontario Police Memorial Foundation will hold its annual ceremony of remembrance at Queen's Park in Toronto. The names of fallen officers are inscribed on the wall of honour. Let's all take a moment to reflect on their courage, dedication and sacrifice.

Heroes are defined by the way they live their lives in service to their communities and in protecting those in harm's way. To the families of those who have given their lives to protect others, we owe you an eternal debt and we keep the memory of your loved ones in our hearts and minds so that they may never be forgotten.

Ontarians are privileged to be protected by our first responders. We are grateful for their dedication, their public service and their commitment to duty and service.

Nous devons une gratitude éternelle aux familles de ceux et celles qui ont sacrifié leur vie pour protéger les autres. Nous gardons la mémoire de vos proches toujours gravée dans nos coeurs et nos pensées. Ils ne seront jamais oubliés.

Les Ontariens sont privilégiés d'être sous la protection de nos premiers répondants. Nous exprimons un grand sens de gratitude envers leur détermination, pour les services qu'ils rendent au public et pour leur engagement à remplir leurs devoirs et leurs fonctions.

Thank you. Merci.

NATIONAL DAY OF MOURNING

Hon. Kevin Daniel Flynn: April 28 is observed across Canada as the day of mourning. It's a day when we pay our respects to and we remember the men and women who have been killed or injured on the job. We also honour the families and friends whose lives have been drastically changed by these tragedies.

This date was picked because on April 28, 1914, the Workmen's Compensation Act was given third reading right in this very Legislature.

Ontario has been recognizing the day of mourning since the 1980s. Now the day of mourning is recognized in more than 100 countries right around the globe.

Here at home, health and safety advocates in our businesses, schools and communities work hard each and every day to ensure healthy and very safe workplaces for our people.

The good news today is that thanks to the efforts of all those people, we've significantly lowered the number of workplace injuries in the province of Ontario. In fact, in the past decade we've reduced injuries by 40%, making Ontario one of the safest places to work in all of Canada.

Despite this progress, too many people, though, continue to lose their lives, or to suffer an injury or an illness, simply as a result of going to work. No job is worth a life; no job is worth an illness or an injury.

While it is very important to track the numbers that will help us ensure our plans are working, there is, of course, a very real and a very human dimension to all of this. When workplace tragedies happen, lives are devastated. Families, co-workers, indeed whole communities, feel the impact, and it's a painful impact. So I take this role very seriously; I know this House takes this issue very seriously as well.

I'm urging each and every member from all three parties in the House today to make workplace health and safety a personal priority. I ask you to spread the word in your own communities that workers have the right to refuse unsafe work, that there are resources available through the Ministry of Labour so employers and workers understand their rights and they understand their responsibilities.

I'm proud to be part of a government that's actively investing in workplace health and safety. At my ministry, we're working hard with our partners to continue to bring the injury numbers down and to eliminate these deaths. We've almost doubled the number of workplace health and safety inspectors in Ontario.

Earlier this month we took action to prevent falls in the construction industry by making new working at heights training mandatory in the province.

We were just recently in Sudbury to announce that the government is accepting and acting on each and every one of the 18 recommendations from the Mining Health, Safety and Prevention Review that was recently undertaken.

We're continuing to conduct inspection blitzes every year to raise safety awareness and to help prevent injuries and fatalities.

But Speaker, I know as much as you do, much more must be done. We must continue to strive to make a difference on this issue for our workers. We need to ensure every workplace has the tools it needs to improve workplace health and safety, and that every worker in the province has the information and the support they need to make choices in the workplace.

Let us all honour those we remember today by rededicating ourselves to doing whatever it takes to prevent workplace fatalities, injuries and illnesses. Let's continue to work hard to change the culture around workplace health and safety.

Let's remember all those who have been killed or injured at work. Let's keep them in our thoughts so we never forget the importance of our commitment to keep workers safe.

Those who have died, been injured or become ill on the job deserve our respect and remembrance. We should

honour the memory of our fallen by pledging to do what we can to make Ontario workplaces as safe as possible for all our working men, women, and their families.

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

FIRST RESPONDERS

Mr. Rick Nicholls: It's my great privilege to rise in the House today on behalf of my colleagues in the Progressive Conservative caucus to express our sincere thanks to the province's first responders.

First responders come in many forms. They include police officers, firefighters, military personnel, paramedics, medical evacuation pilots, dispatchers, nurses, doctors, emergency medical technicians and emergency managers. They are the heroes we call in our times of greatest need. Our first responders are there to answer that call and they never waver.

My former colleague, Frank Klees, the former member from Newmarket–Aurora, deeply believed that public service performed by these men and women deserved to be recognized, honoured and cherished. That's why he fought tirelessly to make May 1 First Responders Day, as a lasting testament to their brave service and sacrifice.

1530

Speaker, I developed a deeper appreciation for our first responders on Friday, September 3, 1999. While driving to work in Windsor on the 401, a thick blanket of fog appeared without warning in the vicinity of Manning Road, leading to the largest vehicle pile-up in Ontario's history. I recall getting out of my car, rescuing a pregnant woman in the median, getting her to safety and then going back to my vehicle and calling the Chatham radio station to report the accident that was unfolding. In the end, some were able to pull over to safety, but many were not so lucky. I can still hear the vehicles in both the eastbound and westbound lanes slamming into each other. It was like I was in a war zone. All told, more than 40 people were injured and, tragically, eight people lost their lives.

But our first responders were the calm amongst the chaos, compassionate in the face of carnage. To this day, I remember their unfaltering courage. I also remember the sights and sounds of that foggy morning, and can only begin to imagine the toll such service takes on our first responders. Many of them, I'm sure, suffered from post-traumatic stress disorder afterwards.

To each and every one of our first responders in our great province, thank you for all that you have done and thank you for what you continue to do. If there ever comes a day when these heroes must call on our government for support, may we answer that call and never waver.

NATIONAL DAY OF MOURNING

Mr. Randy Hillier: Speaker, it's an honour to be speaking in the House this afternoon to the National Day

of Mourning. It was also an honour to speak at the ceremony this morning, on behalf of the Progressive Conservative caucus.

Today we remember the workers who didn't make it home from their jobs. In this country, when someone leaves for work, we expect that they come home. Tragically, sometimes that is not always the case.

Lots of jobs have inherent risks, such as police work, first responders, heavy equipment operators and construction, and the list goes on and on. Accidents can happen on any work site anywhere and to anyone for many reasons.

Having worked on hundreds of job sites myself over my career as an electrician, I have seen my share of workers injured on the job, from cuts to broken bones to lifelong debilitating injuries and also fatalities.

While it's tragic any time someone is injured on the job, it's important that our focus continues on the principles of prevention and precaution. New technologies, precaution and knowledge of workplace hazards are the keys to preventing as many accidents as possible.

While it's a tragedy anytime someone is hurt while performing their workplace duties, unfortunately accidents do happen. That's why it's important that we focus not only on prevention but also rehabilitation and re-introducing workers back into the workplace.

There needs to be support for workers while their injury prevents them from working. Sometimes these injuries may not make it possible for injured workers to return to their former employment. Sometimes they may not even be able to return to their former careers.

That's why it's important that we strive to support and retrain all workers back into the workforce wherever possible. Our goal must always be to have people always using their talents to provide for themselves and their families and to live a long, happy, prosperous and healthy life.

FIRST RESPONDERS

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: On First Responders Day, I come with a request from the tens of thousands of first responders across this province—a very simple one, really: that this government make post-traumatic stress disorder a workplace injury for them, so that when they go to WSIB, they can be treated with dignity. They have asked this not once, not twice, not thrice, not four times, not five times—but also passed in second reading in this House for over the last eight years, and, sadly, still no action.

Thirteen suicides happened in the first 13 weeks of this year—first responders all. Why did they happen? Because of the lack of treatment and lack of dignity afforded our first responders.

Much as we love the glowing words from around this chamber, what they would like to see is action. This bill has passed second reading. This has been called for from all first responders, year in and year out—still no action.

In Alberta, they've managed to act, Mr. Speaker. In 2012, they passed a bill making PTSD a workplace injury

for first responders. And guess what? It's working well. It affords their first responders dignity.

I don't know what more to say, and they don't know what more to say—or more to do. They have asked so many times. How many deaths does it take? How many deaths does it take of our first responders?

I well remember eight years ago when a young paramedic came into my office. She suffered from PTSD and she described the horrible battle she had with WSIB, trying to prove that she got PTSD from her job. Not much has changed. Just the other day I had a call from a firefighter—the same thing. He's been trying for years to prove that the PTSD he suffered from came from his workplace as a first responder, and still no response.

I've spoken many times to the Minister of Labour. We've been promised that something is going to happen, still we ask. So on First Responders Day, it's a simple request, a request from tens of thousands of first responders and their associations and unions across Ontario, and that is: Give us the dignity we deserve. We've heard the words, now, please, finally, let's see the action.

NATIONAL DAY OF MOURNING

Ms. Cindy Forster: It's an honour to rise today on behalf of the New Democrats and Andrea Horwath to commemorate the National Day of Mourning, an NDP initiative that was brought forward in 1991, to honour workers killed on the job.

Speaker, according to WSIB, on-the-job fatalities have increased by almost 40% over the last five years. The grim reality is that in each year more than 80 workers die in traumatic workplace accidents; 300 workers die an even slower death with occupational disease; and 200,000 are maimed or seriously injured. These are only the numbers that are reported. They do not include those who are not reported, those who are temporary foreign workers, those who never make it to the WSIB rolls.

Just last week here in Ontario, William Cerqueira fell three storeys to his death, leaving behind a wife, an 11-year-old son and many LIUNA 506 brothers grieving. Last Tuesday, Mark Attallah, a member of Carpenters 27, was crushed by a crane that collapsed in Brampton. Three weeks ago, bricklayers Luigi Cudini and Shane Jennings of Local 1 died when their working platform buckled and they fell five storeys.

I was honoured today to attend the day of mourning ceremony across from the site of this fall, hosted by the Toronto regional labour council, and the WSIB ceremony as well this morning.

While we mourn for those who have lost their lives, there's much more that needs to be done for the living. For example, the Dean report, a 2010 Expert Advisory Panel on Occupational Health and Safety endorsed by the Ministry of Labour, has seen little or no progress on any of the 46 recommendations. So as we stand here today, we need to make sure that our commitment is to follow through with action.

On a good note, mandatory working at heights training was finally implemented on April 1 this year, although it

was four years late. Hundreds of workers have been trained to date, I've been told by the Workers Health and Safety Centre, but imagine the lives that could have been saved had it been implemented earlier. We owe it to our most valuable resource in this province, our workers.

On behalf of my NDP colleagues, I want to convey my sincerest condolences to the families of William, Mark, Luigi and Shane, and to the countless more whose loved ones didn't come home at the end of their shift.

PETITIONS

PESTICIDES

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the government of Ontario is proposing to make regulatory changes to the Pesticides Act that will have a considerable negative impact on virtually all of Ontario's corn and soybean farmers;

1540

"Whereas comments on the proposed regulations need to be submitted by May 7, 2015; yet the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs plainly states on their website that '[t]he optimum planting day [for corn] is on or before May 7 in southwestern Ontario and May 10 in central and eastern Ontario. Delaying planting past the optimum date can result in yield reductions averaging about 1% per day of delay in May.';

"Whereas the ministry's website also says: 'The highest yields of soybeans are obtained from early plantings, generally the first 10 days of May. Later plantings are likely to incur significant reductions in yield ... ';

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

"Instruct the Ministry of the Environment and Climate Change to extend the comment period on EBR posting number 012-3733 beyond the planting season for corn and soybeans as defined by Agricorp planting deadlines to allow farmers to farm, and be properly consulted on these proposed regulations that will significantly impact their livelihoods."

I totally agree with this petition, I'll affix my signature and send it to the desk with Samantha.

HOME CARE

Mr. Percy Hatfield: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas the Erie St. Clair Community Care Access Centre (CCAC) has historically serviced low-mild need patients;

"Whereas this level of service is critical to the Erie St. Clair CCAC home care patients who depend on it;

"Whereas reliable and robust home care is vital to enable seniors, immobile patients and citizens with special needs to live independent and rewarding lives in their own homes;

"Whereas a reduction to any level of service offered by the CCAC causes undue anxiety to home care patients and their families;

"Whereas the 33% reduction of daily home nursing visits and other service reductions announced by the Erie St. Clair CCAC compromise the health and well-being of home care patients and their families;

"Therefore the undersigned petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To request that the government of Ontario reverse each and every service reduction at the Erie St. Clair CCAC."

I fully agree with this petition. I will sign my name to it and give it to Megan to bring up to the desk.

STUDENT SAFETY

Ms. Indira Naidoo-Harris: I have a petition here 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 this petition. I'm going to affix my signature to it, and I will pass it on to Ashton.

LANDFILL

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: Mr. Speaker, thank you for letting me present this petition on behalf of a great number of my constituents. Again, the petition has been here before, but signed by different people.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas many of the resources of this planet are finite and are necessary to sustain both life and the quality of life for future generations;

"Whereas the disposal of resources in landfills creates environmental hazards which have significant human and financial costs;

"Whereas all levels of government are elected to guarantee their constituents' physical, financial, emotional and mental well-being;

"Whereas the health risks to the community and watershed increase in direct relationship to the proximity of any landfill site;

"Whereas the placement of a landfill in a limestone quarry has been shown to be detrimental;

"Whereas the placement of a landfill in the headwaters of multiple highly vulnerable aquifers is detrimental;

"Therefore be it resolved that we, the undersigned, humbly petition the Legislative Assembly as follows:

"To implement a moratorium in Oxford county, Ontario, on any future landfill construction or approval until such time as a full and comprehensive review of alternatives has been completed which would examine best practices in other jurisdictions around the world;

"That this review of alternatives would give special emphasis on (a) practices which involve the total recycling or composting of all products currently destined for landfill sites in Ontario and (b) the production of goods which can practically and efficiently be recycled or reused so as to not require disposal."

Thank you very much for allowing me to present this petition, Mr. Speaker.

HOME CARE

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Erie St. Clair Community Care Access Centre (CCAC) has historically serviced low-mild need patients;

"Whereas this level of service is critical to the Erie St. Clair CCAC home care patients who depend on it;

"Whereas reliable and robust home care is vital to enable seniors, immobile patients and citizens with special needs to live independent and rewarding lives in their own homes;

"Whereas a reduction to any level of service offered by the CCAC causes undue anxiety to home care patients and their families;

"Whereas the 33% reduction of daily home nursing visits and other service reductions announced by the Erie St. Clair CCAC compromise the health and well-being of home care patients and their families;

"Therefore the undersigned petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To request that the government of Ontario reverse each and every service reduction at the Erie St. Clair CCAC."

I support this petition, will sign my name and give it to page Cailyn.

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: Mr. Speaker, this is another petition on the same subject but a slightly different petition, and, again, presented by a great many people who have signed this one.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the purpose of Ontario's Environmental Protection Act ... is to 'provide for the protection and conservation of the natural environment.' RSO 1990, c. E.19, s. 3.; and

"Whereas 'all landfills will eventually release leachate to the surrounding environment and therefore all landfills will have some impact on the water quality of the local

ecosystem.'—Threats to Sources of Drinking Water and Aquatic Health in Canada;

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

"That section 27 of the EPA should be reviewed and amended immediately to prohibit the establishment of new or expanded landfills at fractured bedrock sites and other hydrogeologically unsuitable locations within the province of Ontario."

Again, I affix my signature as I agree with this petition.

HIGHWAY IMPROVEMENT

Mr. Taras Natyshak: It's my pleasure to introduce a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas Highway 3 from Windsor to Leamington has long been identified as dangerous and unable to meet growing traffic volumes; and

"Whereas the widening of this highway passed its environmental assessment in 2006; and

"Whereas the portion of this project from Windsor to west of the town of Essex has been completed, but the remainder of the project remains stalled; and

"Whereas there has been a recent announcement of plans to rebuild the roadway, culverts, lighting and signals along the portion of Highway 3 that has not been widened;

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

"To revisit plans to rebuild Highway 3 from Essex to Leamington and direct those funds to the timely completion of the already approved widening of this important roadway in Essex county."

I completely agree with this petition, have affixed my name to it and will send it to the Clerks' desk through page Chloe.

DOG OWNERSHIP

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

"Whereas aggressive dogs are found among all breeds and mixed breeds; and

"Whereas breed-specific legislation has been shown to be an expensive and ineffective approach to dog bite prevention; and

"Whereas problem dog owners are best dealt with through education, training and legislation encouraging responsible behaviour;

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

"To repeal the breed-specific sections of the Dog Owners' Liability Act (2005) and any related acts, and to instead implement legislation that encourages responsible ownership of all dog breeds and types."

I agree with this, sign it and send to the table with Luca.

TAXATION

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the Liberal government has proposed a 148% increase in the province’s aviation fuel tax over the next four years; and

“Whereas the tax increase will mean the average family can pay an estimated extra \$50 to \$200 for the flight on top of their tickets; and

“Whereas the massive tax increase: (1) punishes consumers and communities; (2) makes Ontario a less attractive destination to invest and expand into; and (3) compounds an already large competitiveness gap with neighbouring US airports; and

“Whereas the flight tax increase flies in the face of a Liberal election promise of no tax increases on the middle class; and

“Whereas the proposed tax increase will drive away over 400,000 air travellers out of Ontario when three million Ontarians are already crossing the border annually to fly from US airports; and

“Whereas this tax increase will impact many industries across Ontario including manufacturers, freight and tourism including hotels, restaurants, travel agents and tour operators, among others who support the tourism industry; and

“Whereas according to the Canadian Owners and Pilots Association, the increase will effectively squeeze the personal aviation and flight training sector, decreasing activity and curtailing jobs such as aircraft repair and servicing, and flight training; and

“Whereas British Columbia, New Brunswick, Alberta, Quebec and Saskatchewan have eliminated international flight fuel taxes, while Ontario’s rate is set to become one of the highest fuel taxes in the world; and

1550

“Whereas Dr. Fred Lazar of the Schulich School of Business indicates in his study that this tax increase will cost the province up to 2,907 full-time jobs and decrease provincial GDP by up to \$97 million annually;

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

“Ground the flight tax increases pending meaningful consultation and a full study of their adverse economic impacts before it’s too late to reverse the damage to Ontario’s economy.”

I totally agree with this petition. I’ll affix my signature and send it back to the desk with Samantha.

GASOLINE PRICES

Mr. John Vanthof: I’ve got a petition here from Tony Desormeaux from my home township of Coleman.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

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

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

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

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

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

“Mandate the Ontario Energy Board to monitor the price of gasoline across Ontario in order to reduce price volatility and unfair regional price differences while encouraging competition.”

I wholeheartedly agree and would like to send it down to the desk with page Colton.

TAXATION

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I have a petition here to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

“Whereas the Liberal government has proposed a 148% increase in the province’s aviation fuel tax over the next four years; and

“Whereas the tax increase will mean the average family can pay an estimated extra \$50 to \$200 for the flight on top of their tickets; and

“Whereas the massive tax increase: (1) punishes consumers and communities; (2) makes Ontario a less attractive destination to invest and expand into; and (3) compounds an already large competitiveness gap with neighbouring US airports; and

“Whereas the flight tax increase flies in the face of a Liberal election promise of no tax increases on the middle class; and

“Whereas the proposed tax increase will drive away over 400,000 air travellers out of Ontario when three million Ontarians are already crossing the border annually to fly from US airports; and

“Whereas this tax increase will impact many industries across Ontario including manufacturers, freight and tourism including hotels, restaurants, travel agents and tour operators, among others who support the tourism industry; and

“Whereas according to the Canadian Owners and Pilots Association, the increase will effectively squeeze the personal aviation and flight training sector, decreasing activity and curtailing jobs such as aircraft repair and servicing, and flight training; and

“Whereas British Columbia, New Brunswick, Alberta, Quebec and Saskatchewan have eliminated international flight fuel taxes, while Ontario’s rate is set to become one of the highest fuel taxes in the world; and

“Whereas Dr. Fred Lazar of the Schulich School of Business indicates in his study that this tax increase will cost the province up to 2,907 full-time jobs and decrease provincial GDP by up to \$97 million annually;

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

"Ground the flight tax increases pending meaningful consultation and a full study of their adverse economic impacts before it's too late to reverse the damage to Ontario's economy."

This was sent to me by Robert McCormick, and I'm glad to present it on his behalf.

AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: This is a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas Ontario faces an affordable housing crisis; and

"Whereas one in every three renter households lives in housing that is unaffordable, inadequate or in serious need of repair, and more than 165,000 families across Ontario are waiting for rent-geared-to-income housing; and

"Whereas inclusionary zoning laws have helped create affordable housing and alleviated poverty in more than 200 communities across the United States; and

"Whereas research by the Wellesley Institute and the Furman Centre have shown that inclusionary zoning could create thousands of affordable housing units a year in Ontario, without significant impact on the production of market housing, and without any cost to the taxpayer;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to enact a law empowering municipalities across the province to pass inclusionary zoning bylaws which mandate that a specified percentage of new residential developments include affordable housing units."

I couldn't agree more. I'm going to sign it and give it to Afiyah to be delivered to the table.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

2015 ONTARIO BUDGET

Resuming the debate adjourned on April 28, 2015, on the motion that this House approves in general the budgetary policy of the government.

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: I'll be sharing my time with the NDP critic for finance.

I'm pleased to respond to the Liberals' 2015 budget, on behalf of Ontario's New Democrats.

Last week, the Premier unveiled the latest in a series of budgets that failed to address the concerns of the people of Ontario. People are looking for a plan that focuses on their priorities: their kids' education, their health care and the care of their loved ones, being able to find a good-paying job, and making life a little more affordable so that people can keep a little more money in their pockets at the end of the month. Instead, we have a

document full of cuts to the services that Ontarians rely on, full of added burdens to the budgets of households, and full of handouts to those who need them the least.

It does nothing to address the loss of more than 317,000 jobs in the manufacturing sector or to help the half million people who are currently out of work in this province. It continues to ignore the priorities of northern Ontario. It proposes the sale of Hydro One, which will mean even higher hydro bills, making it harder for families to make ends meet and for businesses to stay afloat. In short, it leaves middle-class and struggling Ontarians falling behind.

After all the scandals, the misplaced priorities and the bad decisions, it is clear that Kathleen Wynne and the Liberals still do not know right from wrong. Instead of choosing to close tax loopholes for corporations, Kathleen Wynne is making Ontarians pay the price. This budget cuts education and closes schools. It cuts health care and fires nurses. It cuts poverty reduction programs. It sells off our hydro system to Bay Street and opens the door to more privatization in years to come.

Speaker, this isn't just what I think. This isn't just New Democrats. Let's see what other people are saying about this bad budget.

The Toronto Star writes, "Austerity is the hidden theme. Finance Minister Charles Sousa doesn't use the word in his budget speech."

The Globe and Mail writes, "This is the budget Liberals normally accuse Conservatives of hiding up their sleeve."

Elsewhere, the Globe writes that the 2015 budget imposes "tough austerity on health care and education."

The Ottawa Citizen remarks that the Liberals "have offered an array of goodies that seem more targeted at relatively well-off voters than at the people and sectors most hurt by the recession."

The National Post writes, "The policies and rhetoric of the federal Conservatives, famously supposed to represent the right of the political spectrum, and the provincial Liberals, famously supposed to represent the left, have ended up looking and sounding almost exactly the same." Congratulations to Kathleen Wynne for tabling a budget that rivals that of Stephen Harper.

OntarioNewsWatch writes, "I may have missed it ... but notwithstanding Kathleen Wynne's claims otherwise, I don't recall her ever mentioning she would privatize Ontario's most valuable, largest and oldest public asset—Hydro One—during the 2014 election campaign...."

"Kathleen Wynne seems to have 'crossed the floor'"—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Excuse me. I would ask that when referencing a member in the Ontario Legislature that you refer to the individual, in this particular case, the Premier, as "Premier" and not as first and last name. I would beg your indulgence. Thank you very much.

1600

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Thank you, Speaker. When it's outside of a quote, I absolutely will, but when it's

inside a quote, I really have no choice because that's the quote. But thank you for that, Speaker.

The bottom line is, we agree with OntarioNewsWatch, which writes, "I may have missed it ... but notwithstanding Kathleen Wynne's claims otherwise, I don't"—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Excuse me. I recognize that you are in fact using Kathleen Wynne's name in a quote, but according to the rules of Parliament, you are not to refer to her by first and last name. Please refer to her by her title. I've been instructed by the table that that is protocol, so I would ask for your indulgence in that matter.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: All right, Speaker; I think people got the point about the "oldest public asset—Hydro One—during the 2014 election campaign." That person whose name I will not mention crossed the floor politically. And we agree. We agree that she has crossed the floor politically. We agree with OntarioNewsWatch. With a majority government, it seems that the fly-by-night progressive leanings of our Premier have suddenly disappeared for good.

To make things worse, she and her government are trying to ram this budget through and limit public consultation. It's bad enough that the Premier refuses to be straight with Ontarians about the privatization of Hydro One, but now her House leader is trying to limit public debate. Ontarians deserve the opportunity, through public hearings, to make their concerns and their suggestions known.

The government has a duty to consult widely in communities all across this province because the impacts of this budget will be felt in all corners of the province. This is the democratic process. Having a majority doesn't mean that you can ignore the people of Ontario. To try to ram this budget through and limit consultation is simply wrong. I hope the Premier will actually respect the people of Ontario enough to allow them to be heard.

I want to be clear: The sale of Hydro One is the wrong thing to do. Privatizing hydro was wrong a decade ago, and it is still wrong today. We know this. We know this because we can look to other jurisdictions as well as our own that have privatized their hydro systems or parts thereof and see the results. Right here in Ontario, it went up 25% shortly after the Conservatives privatized the generation of power in this province—25% almost overnight. Nova Scotia privatized its electricity system and now has some of the highest rates in Canada, almost rivalling those of Ontario. This story has played out in many other jurisdictions in Canada and across the US.

Privatization will be bad for Ontarians. Mark my words, Speaker, Ontarians will pay the price. Privatizing hydro will mean higher rates for Ontario families who are already paying the highest electricity rates in Canada. It will mean the loss of hundreds of millions of dollars in stable annual revenue that's needed to fund public services like hospitals and schools. It will mean less reliability and the loss of control of a critical public asset. It also means the loss of oversight by Ontario's Ombudsman, whose work has helped thousands of people—literally thousands—with hydro billing issues.

In fact, the Premier can't even guarantee that the government will retain any control whatsoever of hydro. She is looking to sell 60%. That's a majority stake, no matter how the Liberals want to spin it. That means that the government will no longer be able to make decisions that are in the public interest when it comes to electricity.

Yesterday, we learned that this Liberal government is already exploring the possibility of having a stake that is 10%, keeping only 10% of a stake in hydro or perhaps even less than that. That's not what the Premier has been telling Ontarians; it's nothing like what the Premier has been telling Ontarians.

It is time for this Premier and her government to be upfront and honest with the people of Ontario. They are privatizing Ontario's electricity system. It is wrong. They know it's wrong, but they are going to do it anyway. All of this so that the Premier can pay for Liberal scandals, for wrong choices and for bad decisions: \$1.2 billion wasted on the gas plants scandal, \$2 billion on the smart meter program that has done nothing to help with conservation efforts, another \$1 billion wasted annually to subsidize the export of power to light up the Manhattan skyline. All of this paid for on the backs of ratepayers, on the backs of families, on the backs of businesses, on the backs of Ontarians; all of these Liberal scandals paid for by the people of Ontario.

As if this weren't bad enough, when we examine this Liberal government's record on privatization, we see billions more dollars wasted: \$1 billion at eHealth, another \$1 billion at Ornge, the gas plants, the Presto card rollout, on and on and on. One of our favourites: the \$8.2 billion wasted on the wrong-headed way that this government finances our infrastructure projects. Their privatization agenda has left behind a costly legacy of waste and scandal.

The fact that the Premier and her Liberal government would gamble with Ontario's hydro system is deeply, deeply troubling to New Democrats, and it's troubling to the people of Ontario as well, especially when you think about the small return. It is a very small return: \$4 billion represents at most 3% of their 10-year infrastructure promise.

The National Post calls the Premier's scheme "flawed from the outset," saying that "selling off prized electricity assets to pay for transit projects smacked more of a cash grab than a considered approach to maximizing value and making sound energy policy."

For Ontarians who are already struggling under the weight of the highest bills in Canada, this is very, very troubling. Every day, my office is flooded with emails from people who are having to make tough decisions about how to support their families and keep the lights on.

Since the Liberal privatization announcement, I have been flooded by letters from people who believe that this reckless plan is a bad idea for Ontario. In fact, I have not received a single message of support for the Premier's privatization scheme—not a single one.

Now, it is clear that the Premier has no support whatsoever for her wrong-headed privatization scheme.

Ontarians did not vote for a platform of cuts and privatization. Ontarians didn't elect a banker to run the province, but it certainly seems that that's exactly what we ended up getting. The Premier needs to spend less time on Bay Street and more time on Main Street.

You know what, Speaker? If she did listen to Ontarians, she would hear loud and clear that she does not have a mandate to privatize our hydro. New Democrats have always believed in investing in transit and infrastructure, but not at the cost of a short-sighted sell-off of our hydro public assets. This Premier is the first Premier in 100 years who can't figure out how to build infrastructure without selling our electricity system. How sad.

Ontario's New Democrats are going to fight this sell-off, because Ontarians know that this is absolutely the wrong plan, because once it's gone, it is gone for good.

In the coming days and weeks, my caucus and I are going to be in communities across the province. What we are going to do is hold town halls. We are going to be talking to Ontarians about their opportunity to sign petitions, asking people to write to their Liberal MPPs, encouraging them to take that voice that they have and use it to tell their MPPs what they really think, and we're going to be doing much, much more.

The Premier of this province, the Liberal Premier, may want to shut Ontarians down, but New Democrats want to do the opposite. New Democrats want to respect Ontarians by giving them a chance to have a voice on this extremely important issue. Do you know why, Speaker? Because Ontarians deserve to have a voice. They deserve to be heard. They deserve to be respected, because they will be the ones paying the price.

But there's much, much more bad news for Ontarians in this budget, and I'm going to spend a few seconds on that. We already have nurses on the picket line. We have hospitals and wards closing in communities all around the province. We have hospitals that have been running in situations of overcapacity for months on end. In fact, I was just in Thunder Bay hearing from front-line staff about that very issue. We have nurses being fired. All of this is the result of the 2014 budget, Speaker.

1610

This year's budget imposes even harsher cuts. The Ontario Medical Association said of this budget that it "puts the health care system at risk." While health care costs are increasing in the range of 3% to 5% annually in terms of inflationary pressures, the government is only increasing spending by 1.2%, barely the rate of inflation.

As the Ontario Health Coalition has said, "The real-dollar cuts across ... health care also mean damaging—and potentially irreversible—cuts, closures and privatization of needed health care."

The RPNAO, the Registered Practical Nurses Association of Ontario, makes it clear that front-line staff "will continue to suffer from increased workloads, stress, burnout and the moral distress associated with watching in frustration as their patients fail to get the level and quality of care they deserve."

Unifor puts it more starkly: "Keeping the health care budget ... below inflation puts lives at risk."

On top of the underfunding of Ontario's health care system, this Liberal government will also be implementing, for the fourth consecutive year, hospital funding freezes. I would like to note that the ministry refused to answer any direct questions from my staff about hospital funding, but these freezes have been confirmed by ONA, the Ontario Nurses' Association, and the Toronto Star—so much for the openness and transparency of the openness and transparency Premier. I think she forget her openness and transparency when she started to prepare this budget.

As I was saying, this Liberal government will freeze hospital budgets for the fourth consecutive year. This represents the longest unbroken period of real-dollar public hospital cuts in Ontario's history. This will have a devastating impact, as we all know, on our hospitals. People will wait longer for service. They will travel further distances to get the care they need. There will be more shortages of beds and more overcrowding. There will be real consequences because of these cuts.

The Ontario Nurses' Association makes it very clear that "another consecutive year of hospital funding freezes means that registered nurses will be cut, leaving hospital patients in Ontario at an increased risk of complications and even death." That's a pretty strong statement. That will be on the heads of the Liberals sitting across the way.

This is the Liberal government's transformation of Ontario's health care system: Fewer resources for our health professionals, even as our aging population puts increasing demands on the system. New Democrats believe that Ontarians deserve properly funded, high-quality health care regardless of where they live in this province; it is a right that they all deserve. This includes northern Ontario, rural Ontario and southwestern Ontario, where people are seeing their local hospitals threatened. These communities deserve high-quality health care as much as anyone else in Ontario, as much as people who live in major urban centres, who have the luxury of a number of other hospitals at their disposal.

I want to be clear, Speaker. New Democrats believe that this budget does great harm, possibly irreversible harm, to Ontario's health care system.

Look at education, and once again what we see in this budget is more Liberal cuts. This budget cuts education, closes schools and fires teachers. The Liberals have already cut \$250 million so far this year as they work towards cutting half a billion dollars from education. In addition, there will be a complete freeze on spending from 2016-18, while during this period, inflation is projected by their own admission to be about 2% each year. This means even deeper cuts are on the horizon for education. Families, parents and students are already feeling the pinch, and they are seeing the results of all of this first-hand. They're watching as teachers and early childhood educators are being fired. Already, we have disrupted classrooms and students out of school, because these Liberal cuts are hurting education.

Meanwhile communities—especially some of the province’s most struggling communities—are staring down the possibility of seeing schools in their communities close. This, once again, so-called modernization—if it’s not transformation, it’s modernization—strategy will tear the soul out of these hard-working neighbourhoods. We know that this is short-sighted, and we do not agree with the direction of this government when it comes to education. We know—absolutely everybody is aware—that there is an ebb and flow to school enrolment, and that many of these same areas are seeing an influx of new Canadians at the same time as young families as well. So five years down the road, we will be struggling to keep up with demand in these very same areas where the Liberals are now closing down schools. It is very, very short-sighted.

New Democrats believe that we should be smarter when it comes to our schools. Our schools are valuable neighbourhood assets that could be used to provide badly needed child care spaces or seniors’ programming or even rental space that would provide revenues. Closing our public schools is not only short-sighted; it is wasteful and, frankly, New Democrats think it is wrong.

Unfortunately, our post-secondary education system doesn’t seem to fare any better in this budget. The government is committing to three years of funding cuts to Ontario’s universities and colleges. Three years of funding cuts is what’s in that budget. High-quality post-secondary education is a big part of what gives Ontario an edge as a labour force on the world stage. In fact, I don’t know how many times I sat in this chamber and heard Liberal Premiers say the exact same thing: that top-notch post-secondary education was what was going to make sure that we were going to have a top-notch labour force that was going to be able to compete globally with anybody else around the world.

I have to say that the Liberal Premier of Ontario has abandoned all belief in that goal. These cuts leave groups like OCUFA “questioning the government’s commitment to a high-quality higher education system that is truly public, high quality and accessible to every student.” Further, they say, “Students, contract faculty members and their families are now paying for the government’s unwillingness to invest in universities. In the longer term, every Ontarian will feel the effects of the erosion of public university funding.”

The Ontario federation of students calls the Ontario Liberal government’s 2015 budget “another missed opportunity to address the chronic underfunding of post-secondary education that has made Ontario the most expensive province in which to attend college or university.” The proposed changes to OSAP do little to address the upfront costs of post-secondary education of Ontario students, who are already paying the highest tuition rates in all of Canada.

New Democrats believe that we need to invest in our post-secondary education system if we are going to be able to build the best possible 21st-century workforce. It is unfair for the government to saddle a generation of students with an unbearable debt burden. This will only

hurt our province’s economy in the future. Once again, this Liberal government is being short-sighted and putting the burden of our province’s recovery on the backs of those who can least afford it.

This brings me to northern Ontario, a region that is no stranger to being ignored by this Liberal government. It should come as no surprise that the 2015 budget, once again, ignores the priorities of northern Ontario. This Liberal budget, once again, has northern families paying the price while getting nothing—zilch—in return. It does nothing to address the electricity needs of the mining industry. It does nothing to address the government’s failure to form meaningful partnerships with First Nations leaders. It does nothing to address the failure of leadership on the Ring of Fire development.

In fact, the budget tells us that there will be no investment in the Ring of Fire until after the next election. They’re punting their promise that they made in this last election campaign—another billion dollars, they announced at an election campaign a year ago, and now they’re saying, “We’re not doing any of that until sometime maybe in 2018-19. Thank you very much, northern Ontario. We’re going to wash our hands of you for the next couple of years.” Really, it is just unbelievable.

The bottom line is, I was in Thunder Bay during the last election when the Premier did make that announcement. Somehow I don’t recall it—because it wasn’t done. She didn’t mention at all the fact that there would be no funding until 2018-19.

1620

You know what? I have to sadly say—and I’m sure my northern colleagues here would agree—it’s not a surprise. It is not surprising. It continues the sorry legacy that this Liberal government has shown on the Ring of Fire: complete lack of leadership. It is absolutely shameful: more than seven years of announcements and ribbon cuttings and blah blah blah, as our old friend Rosario Marchese would have said; oh, sorry, the ex-member, the former member. Should I say that, Speaker? The former member for Trinity–Spadina.

But more than seven years of announcements and not a single thing to show for it. There is nothing in this budget for the north—nothing, big goose egg. A few re-announcements about roads—yes. Continuation of a \$30-million cut to the NIER Program—yes. A step back from meaningful commitments to First Nations communities—yes. I think we went backwards in this budget when it comes to the north.

The Liberals even managed to claw back that meagre commitment from the 2014 budget to First Nations.

The Liberal legacy in the north is one of a failure of leadership, full stop.

In wrapping up, Speaker, I want to say very clearly to the people of Ontario: This is a bad, bad budget. It is the wrong budget for today’s Ontario. It is the wrong budget for Ontario families. It is the wrong budget for Ontario businesses—small, medium, large. It is the wrong budget for agriculture.

It is a budget that will hurt Ontarians not only this year but for many, many generations to come.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Continuing with debate, I recognize the member from Kitchener–Waterloo.

Ms. Catherine Fife: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and thanks to the leader for setting the tone for this budget. I think that she hit all the right notes. She accurately communicated the frustration that all of us are hearing in our own ridings across this province.

My commentary after attending the lock-up, after attending the financial briefing—which I must thank the finance staff from the ministry for delivering yesterday. They're very committed people. When we asked the hard questions, they helped us peel back the layers on this budget. I want to thank them for that.

The theme that I'd like to focus on, actually, is that this budget, budget 2015, doubles down on austerity from last year's budget. Every ministry, last budget, had a 6% cut. We didn't hear too much about that during the election. It's very unfortunate because people bought in to a definition of "progressive" which, quite honestly, we've had to move away from because it was just not true.

This budget has 5.5% cuts in every ministry as well, with the exception of four ministries. But if we learned from last year's budget, those cuts actually happened and they're actually listed in this budget as well. Even though we heard that some ministries were safe, that was not the case.

What I really want to focus on is that this budget is predicated on, and the spin around this budget is, that the selling off of Hydro One is good for the people of this province when, quite honestly, it isn't.

With the release of the budget last Thursday and the tabling of the budget motion, we know that the Liberals' first priority is to sell off Hydro One. They are so desperate for revenue that they are willing to sell off the future of this province on reliable energy, on revenues from Hydro One and on rates that actually will only have one direction to go, and that is up. That's clear from schedule 9.

It's also clear from all of the schedules which remove Hydro One from oversight, which is quite an undertaking—that is, removing oversight from all of the legislative officers. This is the other side of the coin. The Financial Accountability Officer loses oversight; the Auditor General loses oversight; the Ombudsman of Ontario loses oversight by taking away Hydro One's status as a public sector entity.

The goal of this budget obviously is for a quick cash grab. The people of this province, I think, are waking up to the reality of this sale. Certainly, and what they tell me in the grocery store, in the library and in the schoolyard, is that this was not part of the platform. The ministry—the Premier—does not have a mandate to sell off Hydro One. Yet here we are, looking for a quick cash grab—in all the wrong places, I would say.

There are dozens of schedules in this budget bill, but the thrust is to double down on the selling off of Hydro One before most Ontarians even know what's going on.

We've been determined to share the story of what's happening in this House with the people of this province, but thankfully there are some very progressive voices in the media who have actually weighed in on this. One of them—this was just in the *Globe and Mail* on April 27. Mr. Laxer says, "In truth, the big losers will be Ontarians. They will be reduced from owners of the system to its tenants and they will pay out extra billions to the new owners in the decades to come."

That's essentially what's happening. The people of this province are losing this important asset. They're going to become tenants in this electricity system, and I think it's pretty safe to say that there's not going to be any rent control. If we've learned anything from the past, Mr. Speaker, it's that rates will only go up.

The Liberal government will say that there's no choice. That's the theme here. The Premier stands up, day in and day out, and says, "No, we don't have any choice in the matter." In order to make investments in transit and infrastructure, they say that we have to follow the advice of Bay Street, regardless of the conflict of interest that exists on this file.

We just learned this morning that we paid \$7 million for this advice, and what did they say that the province should do? Well, it's not surprising what they said. They said, "We should sell off Hydro One to the private sector." Imagine that, Mr. Speaker. Imagine that a group of private sector consultants, with connections to all of the Bay Street players, would recommend that our publicly owned electricity distributor should be sold off—

Ms. Cindy Forster: I thought Ed worked for free.

Ms. Catherine Fife: That's true. Mr. Clark said he was working for free. But \$7 million is not free. We didn't get a fair deal on this transaction.

It's even more surprising when you consider that Hydro One-OPG made windfall profits of an additional \$371 million last year. It's really quite surprising that the private sector would want a cut of that annual revenue. Of course, they're looking for that revenue, and they see a willing partner in the Premier of this province.

But the Liberals remain committed to telling you that there's no choice. If you want transit, Hydro One must be sold. That's the deal. It's the only way.

They also announced the modernization of alcohol policy in the province on the same day, just to say, "Look over here. We've got six-packs in the Walmart and we've got 12-packs over here in 10 LCBO stores. Don't pay attention, folks, to what's really going on in the province."

What if I told you that the \$4 billion that the government will make by selling off the 60% of Hydro One is only 3%? This is an important piece. You are absolutely gambling the future of our electricity system, of reliable rates, of affordable electricity—for what? For 3%. It has been said that this won't even pay for half of some of the big projects that you promised—or that you actually reannounced—in this last budget. It's a drop in the bucket.

But it is amazing that you have to go to the extreme of selling off this strategic, reliable, public asset for \$4 billion when you could find money, no problem, when it was making a private energy company whole—you made whole a private energy company during the gas plant scandal. There was no problem whatsoever finding that kind of cash.

Let's get back to the impact on the people of this province, because what's really going to happen—because we know from our history what's going to happen—is that rates are going to go up, reliability will go down, and the province will lose an extremely valuable source of revenue.

Let's cover how the rates will go up.

Right now, there's no incentive to increase Hydro One's profits. The mandate of Hydro One as an organization is to deliver reliable energy to Ontarians and remit any revenue above operating costs back to the province. There's no one at the board suggesting that a renovation on a power line shouldn't be done this year because it would look bad on the quarterly report of the shareholders. But that changes as soon as Hydro One starts issuing shares. Once this budget passes, the public loses control over Hydro One and then, according to the government, the OEB will protect ratepayers. Well, we know that that actually is not the track record of the OEB in the province of Ontario.

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Rates have gone up three times since 2002. They have tripled. All of us in this House fully understand that the people in our ridings cannot afford for those rates to continue to go up.

It is also worth noting that the energy rates are now three times higher than they were when the Harris Conservatives started privatizing the energy system, and there has been inconsistency in delivery of those rates. There's no rhyme or reason to it, quite honestly.

Right now, there are thousands of people in this province who are having to choose between paying their energy bills and putting food on the table. That's not right. That should be Premier Wynne's focus, not what's in the best interests of Bay Street. It is time to get our priorities straight in this House and put people first.

As soon as this budget passes, there will be no recourse for Ontarians. That's why this is such a serious issue. Accountability will be gone. Transparency will be gone. Annual revenue will be gone. This government is slamming the door on transparency and accountability on the electricity file.

As it stands, the Ombudsman, the Auditor General and the privacy commissioner etc. can all investigate Hydro One. That kind of oversight improves things for consumers and energy users. The Ombudsman reports and Auditor General reports make energy delivery better because Ontarians can tell the government and the opposition the challenges that they are facing. This budget removes that oversight in several schedules.

Even if the IPO doesn't happen for a few years, oversight is gone when this budget passes. That, in and of

itself, tells the people of this province whose interests this budget is in. It is not in their interest; it's in the interests of Bay Street.

The profit motive going forward with this new, privatized Hydro One will drive up rates in Ontario, and I think, fundamentally, people understand this. Even the Premier and Ed Clark wouldn't deny that possibility on the day they released this paper. They prefer to talk about beer, but we really tried hard to bring it back to the rates. Rates are going to go up, and Ontarians will no longer be able to count on oversight to protect them or to shine a light on the problems that exist.

Reliability is a related problem. Private shareholders will have no reason to invest in the distribution system to ensure it is reliable—that people in every corner of the province get the power that they need. Instead, the first concern will be shareholders. Sure, the province will be a shareholder, but not the majority shareholder. That loss of control will doom energy reliability.

We heard yesterday, in our finance briefing, that the government has not crafted this piece of legislation to ensure that they will remain the majority holder. In fact, they've left that door wide open. The day that this announcement was made, a member of the media, from the Toronto Star, asked the Premier outright, "Is this the thin edge of the wedge? What else is for sale in the province of Ontario?" Quite honestly, the answer was, "Do you know what? We're going to see how this goes." So that door is open. That's why the fight to protect Hydro One in the best interests of the people of this province is a fight worth fighting for.

On the revenue side, for a government that is desperate for revenue, giving up hundreds of millions of dollars—annual dollars—that go to our schools and hospitals is incredibly short-sighted. It's inconceivable that we're even debating this issue. We should be debating job creation. We should be talking about an industrial energy rate. We should be talking about the youth unemployment rate and how to inspire investors in the province of Ontario to get our young people back to work. Instead, we're talking about such a misguided plan. Really, it's essentially throwing money right out the door, because once this asset is gone, it is gone, gone, gone. There is no recourse for the people of this province.

It's important for us to remember that this Premier has no mandate to do this. The average Ontarian, if you talk to them, had no idea that Hydro One was going to be for sale. They refuse to this day to say that they are selling off Hydro One. They refuse to say that they are privatizing. They say "unlocking" or "broadening the ownership." I guess it's time to broaden the definition of "progressive," because there's nothing progressive about selling off Hydro One.

I do think it's important to remember why we are here, in this place, in this time, in the province of Ontario. We heard a lot about what leadership is. Leadership is about making decisions, and it's also about choices. This Premier has made some pretty devastating choices, Mr.

Speaker, for the people of this province. She would have Ontarians believe that there is in fact no choice, that there is no recourse, that this has to happen. We challenge the premise of that wholeheartedly. She says that she must sell assets to pay for infrastructure, but we also know the choices that they have made, that she has made.

We should remember that when the Premier was the Minister of Transportation back in 2010, she chose to remove \$4 billion from the transit file, to cut that \$4 billion from transit so her government could then give corporations a tax break that cost the provincial treasury \$2.5 billion every year, an amount that could completely fund the Big Move.

Interjections.

Ms. Catherine Fife: This did happen. Potentially, if that had not happened, we would be receiving \$2.5 billion every year to completely fund the Big Move, with enough left over to restore provincial funding for transit operations. Then you wouldn't have to be going back on all of these transit promises. It's like a moving target, your transit strategy.

We've heard for so long in Kitchener-Waterloo—the transit promises that have come in and out of our region would make your head spin, honestly, Mr. Speaker. Just before the election, the Premier and the minister of the day came to town and stood on the same train station platform as us. They said “two-way, all-day,” “electrified,” “every 15 minutes,” “high-speed rail for \$500 million”—

Ms. Cindy Forster: A bullet.

Ms. Catherine Fife: We even heard of this bullet train. They pulled out all the stops. Well, there is no two-way, all-day. There are no 10,000 people who can get to Kitchener-Waterloo.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Is it in the budget?

Ms. Catherine Fife: It's not in the budget.

There was, at one time, though, in a budget a promise of \$600 million for the LRT. That \$600 million, of course, was never realized. It actually got cut by 50%, to \$300 million.

What is in the budget is the re-announcement of Highway 7. This is eight years of Highway 7. It's like Groundhog Day. There are only so many ribbons you can cut.

Let's remember choices, because for the Premier to stand up and say she has no choice—she had choices, and she could focus more on the revenue streams that are needed for this province instead of cutting. Quite honestly, some of these cuts are going to be devastating for the ministries. We've already heard from some of them.

Essentially, what this budget does is really throws everything under the bus except for infrastructure. That comment came from Hugh Mackenzie. He makes some really good points as well. He says, “Elementary and secondary education spending is going up at less than the rate of inflation, and that includes the remaining cost of implementing full-day kindergarten.” That's an important piece, Mr. Speaker, because this government throws a big number back at us on education.

Whatever new money they did put in education went to FDK. The Rozanski report identified \$2 billion in cuts from the former Harris government; those are still standing. Those cuts are systemic. They are built in to the education funding, and your own budget actually demonstrates that \$248 million has been removed from education. That's why it's in brackets in this chart.

“Post-secondary education will actually be dropping at a rate of 0.4% per year on the way to budget balance.” We met with university students—the member from London West and I met with OUSA last week—and they can't believe it. They can't believe that these cuts are happening because that's not what they were promised. It's a bit of a wake-up call, actually, for a lot of groups across the province.

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Of course, health care will increase at less than inflation, so that essentially is a cut.

At this point, there's no comprehensive strategy for aging in the province of Ontario. We had a round table in our riding—and I know that this is an issue across the province—around a lack of a dementia strategy, an aging strategy for the seniors in our communities. If you sit down and listen to these people, if you get out of this place and you listen to the real people of this province, if you don't just spend your time on Bay Street, you actually can hear the pain that people are experiencing because this government has no strategy to deal with an aging demographic.

The health care funding as it stands today will actually drive more people to the emergency rooms, and that costs more money. These cuts will not lead us back to prosperity. It is, pure and simple, an austerity budget.

Social assistance benefits: Both Ontario Works and ODSP are still lower, by 5% to 7% after accounting for inflation, than where they were at the end of the Harris era. So this really is about priorities.

Bay Street gets their attention. The consultants make \$7 million for a report that recommends a financial strategy which, quite honestly, is bad for the economy of this province, and they get priority status. It is really incredible.

Also, taking a step back just to look at the critical gaps which are already evident in this budget: The ministries that received the 6% cut, everything from worker safety—here we are on the day of mourning, five years past the mandatory recommendations that came out of the Dean report. There were 11; one of them was working at heights training, one was the swing stage—these have not been enacted, and that costs money, too.

When you're creating legislation or when you're directing funds to those respective ministries, if you're not being proactive or adopting an early intervention piece, or even a compassionate perspective on these issues, you end up spending more money down the road.

What I think is really more disappointing than ever is that this government had the opportunity to actually demonstrate that they understood that there is a revenue problem in the province of Ontario. You just have to look

at the budget itself, as contained in the charts. One of those, obviously, is job creation. This government predicted that last year they would create 67,000 jobs; based on the numbers contained in your own budget, those jobs were not realized. That is lost revenue.

You have to peel back the layers and find out why those jobs were not created. A lot of it actually goes back to energy, because we lost those good-paying manufacturing jobs. When people think about investing in the province of Ontario, the energy rate is at the top of the list. So we are not drawing that kind of investment because of energy. At the same time, we're contemplating cutting off one of the major revenue streams that we receive from OPG and Hydro One, as is indicated in your very budget.

There are a number of other issues that we obviously need to talk about. Hydro One: Our leader covered the entire complement of issues that this sale will bring.

The other issue, of course, is the ORPP. I have to say that the huge red flag for us on the creation of the ORPP Administration Corp., as was dictated in this budget, is the very fact that on pages 148 and 149, this government is putting out an RFP for a third party to come and manage the ORPP. If this government's track record is anything for us to be concerned about—and it is; your track record is not good on these issues—one has only to look at the Auditor General's report to verify how poorly you manage these issues.

Interjection.

Ms. Catherine Fife: Well, it is negative. It is negative when money goes to Bay Street and not to the programs that we want. It is negative.

If you were trying to create a public pension plan and managing it in-house with the expertise of the excellent civil service, then that might be a different issue, but you've put out an RFP for a third party to come in. If we look at what happened in BC, seven out of the 10 top public servants were managing that pension fund, so they're doing okay. Some of the money that they are making is, quite honestly, obscene for managing a pension fund, when every dollar that is collected for a public pension plan should go into that plan for the people that it was originally created to serve. We have huge issues with the ORPP, but mainly, all of those issues are predicated on the fact that we don't trust you to do it properly.

Obviously, the ORPP Administration Corp. will also not be subject to the Corporations Information Act. Again, it's another agency, another stand-alone third-party group to run wild with the money that's in this province. The lack of oversight that you'll have on this should be concerning to you, if you care about where the money is going, if you do care about where the funding goes.

The other issue that I want to raise falls under schedule 40 under the Taxation Act. This government has promised to strengthen apprenticeships. There's \$23 million targeted. At the same time as the \$23 million is on this side, you're removing the tax credit for the private

sector to actually bring those apprenticeships—you're cutting it by \$55 million.

Interjection.

Ms. Catherine Fife: Actually, we do. We come from the side of the House that knows that tax credits are a very accountable way. We really support the job creator tax credit: You create a job and you get a tax credit. If you don't know this, then you should know this: There is a huge gap on the skilled trades side. There's a huge calling for the trades in this province, which ironically is very much connected to the infrastructure file. You need the people to actually build the infrastructure, Mr. Speaker. By withdrawing or cutting this tax credit, you're actually disincentivizing the apprenticeship program, very—

Hon. James J. Bradley: Is that a word?

Ms. Catherine Fife: Well, listen, if you can say "unlocking" instead of "selling," then I can say "disincentivizing."

One of the other issues is that even from an economic perspective, those industries that are actually thriving, like the Ontario film industry—this is especially important for Toronto. The film industry contributes to restaurants and hotels. Those are good jobs, especially when those child actors are treated appropriately—our member will be bringing forward that bill. And yet, now you're cutting that tax credit. You have to know how important the arts are to the economy. You have to know how really vulnerable that field still is to actually add a whole other layer of insecurity to it by actually withdrawing that tax credit.

In trying to wrap up a little bit, a significant amount of amendments propose treating the ORPP Administration Corp., as well as Hydro One and its subsidiaries, as non-public entities. You are fully embracing privatization. You're not even hiding it anymore. You won't say it, but I have to tell you, it's out there in the open.

A six-month transition period from royal assent is provided for Hydro One and its subsidiaries, so you get six months for the Auditor General, who is now conducting a current investigation of Hydro One—she has six months to finish up her audit because this government wants to sell Hydro One, and then she won't get to review those findings in two years because she won't have access to the information. So she's doing an audit on Hydro One and then basically nothing will happen. If there are some serious recommendations, they won't be put into place.

Interjection: It's too late.

Ms. Catherine Fife: It's too late. Sorry, you're out of luck. The people of the province are out of luck. Hydro One is on the chopping block. Just turn your lights off a lot more.

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At the end of six months, Hydro One and its subsidiaries will no longer be under the purview of the Auditor General. They will no longer be required to disclose employee salaries. They will no longer be required to cap executive salaries. Of course, the issue of a hard cap on

public sector CEOs is a long-standing issue, but you won't have to worry about that anymore. It will no longer be under the purview of the Financial Accountability Officer. They will no longer be required to disclose financial information to the minister beyond consolidated financial statements. It will no longer be under the purview of the Management Board of Cabinet, under the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy of Act—don't worry about that—or the Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act. It will no longer be under Ombudsman oversight, it will no longer be under the Integrity Commissioner's oversight, including relating expenses, and it won't be under the Trillium Trust Act.

So you're really just setting it free, fingers crossed, hoping for the best with some sort of mantra, like "Just trust us." Well, nobody trusts this government. Nobody does; it has to be said.

The governance piece of the ORPP is so important. They've pushed this all to the regulations. By doing that, which is a growing trend in this Legislature, they're actually removing us from the process as duly elected representatives. They're putting all those details over to the regulations, where quite honestly we can't get to them. That was a frustrating part, actually, at the finance briefing yesterday.

Ms. Cindy Forster: Kind of like a Harper omnibus bill.

Ms. Catherine Fife: It is. I mean, the similarities between this Premier and Mr. Harper are astounding to me.

Next, I am expecting some version of Bill 51—but of course that already happened under McGuinty when former Chief Blair was in charge. He has a new definition of what a kettle is, I can tell you that much.

So here we are in the province of Ontario. We have a government that continues to lose confidence from an economic perspective. They've indicated how short-sighted they are by putting Hydro One on the chopping block and indicating, quite honestly, to the people of this province that they're not interested in that annual income, that they are not interested in keeping hydro rates down, that they are not interested in ensuring some level of reliability for the hydro system.

I think that it's really clear to a lot of people, and it certainly is clear to us, that not only does this budget not meet the needs of the people of this province, it puts the wrong people at the top of the priority list. We need to fight this.

In a recent interview, I pleaded with people in my riding to pay attention. People need to pay attention to what is going on in this Legislature. They need to know how short-sighted this strategy is. We are going to be following the money, obviously, as this budget unfolds.

Clearly, this government thinks that they can do whatever they want. They've appointed an assistant finance minister in Mr. Clark to come down with these strategies, which do not serve the people of this province. Then they distract us with beer announcements. If it wasn't so serious and if it wasn't so painful, it might resemble

some version of a Monty Python movie, because nobody is buying what this government is selling. The only party that's standing up for the people of this province are New Democrats, and we're going to continue to fight this each and every day.

Thank you very much.

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

Ms. Soo Wong: I move adjournment of the debate.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Ms. Wong moves adjournment of debate. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Agreed. Carried.

Debate adjourned.

ONTARIO RETIREMENT PENSION PLAN ACT, 2015

LOI DE 2015 SUR LE RÉGIME DE RETRAITE DE LA PROVINCE DE L'ONTARIO

Resuming the debate adjourned on April 27, 2015, on the motion for third reading of the following bill:

Bill 56, An Act to require the establishment of the Ontario Retirement Pension Plan / Projet de loi 56, Loi exigeant l'établissement du Régime de retraite de la province de l'Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): When this item of business was last debated, we had completed questions and comments on the speech by the member from Elgin–Middlesex–London.

Further debate?

Mr. Taras Natyshak: It is as always, of course, a pleasure to rise in this House to speak to any bill, particularly one of such importance; and also to follow up on what we just heard from the leader of our province—leader of our party; hopefully, eventually, the leader of the province—and our finance critic on the budget. Many of the issues intertwine. Certainly we heard about the proposed Ontario Retirement Pension Plan Act, and that's what I'm speaking to: the ORPP Act, 2015, Bill 56.

Undoubtedly in this province, workers are having a hard time making ends meet. We can point to several areas within our provincial economy that have created an imbalance and inequity in incomes, retirement security and pension security. Inevitably, that has led this government to attempt to do something about it, from a chorus of stakeholders and everyday Ontarians who are calling for some measures on the part of this government and the federal government to protect and ensure that workers in this province who dedicate their lives and many years to an employer are able to retire with dignity and security. We assume that's what this government is attempting to do through the Ontario Retirement Pension Plan Act.

Now, two thirds or 66.7% of Ontarians do not currently have a workplace pension. Imagine, you work your entire life—and more and more people in our economy and more and more job seekers and those who enter the labour market are finding employment with what we

know now as precarious work, which delivers a job, certainly, but not a career and not a vocation, not something that we know traditionally gave families and individuals the ability to raise a family, to live that Ontario dream, that Canadian dream: to afford a home, afford to make those expenditures and afford to save. No longer are those the dominant jobs available in the workforce.

I've done it many times. I'm able to juxtapose free trade and the elimination of those provisions, protection mechanisms, into a lot of our economic hardships. You point to that point in time when we lost so much of our domestic manufacturing, the backbone of our economy specifically here in Ontario.

What I say is that the economic shift or the demographic shift in the jobs that are available is directly related to the measures taken on the part of the various federal and provincial governments over the years. Nonetheless, we're here today attempting to deal with those ramifications.

We know that 66.7% of Ontarians do not currently have a workplace pension, and some Ontarians with insufficient workplace pensions also still struggle into retirement. Undoubtedly, we have a retirement crisis in the province of Ontario. We know that when people have disposable income at the end of their working careers, something that they can literally bank on, they have a whole host, a variety of better social outcomes, whether it be health or whether it be security of self, and also economic generation in the buying capacity that so many organizations would point to as being an important metric in a healthy, stable economy.

When we have an aging demographic that has purchasing power, we have an overall healthy economy. That's no longer the case. Baby boomers are now competing with their children for decent-paying jobs—this is after their entire working career—because of the change, that seismic shift in the nature of work in the province and, I would argue, the entire country, where we no longer have built into workplaces the provisions of a defined benefit plan, which was the staple, which was the benchmark of what we would call a good-paying job in the province.

1700

What we find now is precarious part-time work, contract work that often doesn't give any benefits whatsoever and leaves people even more vulnerable—and these are for older workers even. Imagine what it's like for young workers entering the labour market. Imagine what it's like for young workers who have incurred massive post-secondary education debt. The prospects are bleak, and we see no measures on the part of the government trying to attempt to remedy that, although this is one signal that can potentially give a little bit of hope that they're even talking about it.

I think, more so, it's not born out of the ideology of the Liberal Party or the Liberal government; it is born out of the demand of Ontarians for this government or any government to do something. I would definitely say that

the negligence on the part of the federal government to take any action towards enhancing the Canada Pension Plan, the GIS or the OAS is the reason why we're talking about this today. No doubt, economists and pension retirement experts would point to enhancements in our Canada Pension Plan as being probably the most effective, efficient vehicle to ensure retirement security. I know that in 2005, 2007, 2008, 2011, Jack Layton, the late former leader of the—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Stop the clock, please. Thank you. I don't want to detract from the speaker, but there appear to be some additional conversations going on on the side. Please do your best to use your inside voice, because I do want to hear what the speaker has to say.

Mr. Todd Smith: You're the Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Thank you very much. I'm the Speaker, but he's the speaker right now.

Start the clock. Back to the speaker.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Thank you very much, Speaker. I think I needed a water break anyhow, but I appreciate the attention of the House and your organization of this place.

Jack Layton campaigned on the idea, on the principle of expanding and enhancing the Canada Pension Plan. The premise was, over the course of the next seven years, to double the CPP, to double the eligible benefits for the CPP.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: That's when the retirement age was 65.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: That's true: It was when the retirement age was 65. Stephen Harper has since increased it to age 67, so you're going to be working longer for less.

When I campaigned on that issue alone, it really resonated. It certainly resonated within those who are nearing or at retirement, but also within a younger demographic that understood that it was important for them to have some sort of secure financial vehicle—because the markets these days are, as I would imagine they always have been, quite volatile. We don't have to look too far back in this decade to see where many retirees and many who invested in RRSPs lost much of their value in their retirement savings. Even in private pension funds, we saw an enormous decrease in value.

We would also point to the fact that this government and the federal government have yet to enact legislation to protect those who are invested in private pension plans, another initiative of the federal NDP, which brought about a piece of legislation that was called the workers first bill. We've seen far too many times where multinational corporations would, for one reason or another, declare bankruptcy in this country and absolve themselves of any of their responsibilities to the retirees and to those who have contributed to pension plans. They go at the bottom of the list when it comes to insolvency and bankruptcy. So you've got a mechanism where

you've got law in this country that doesn't protect people who already invest in private plans. Wouldn't we, as a government, want to look at that provision first before we start to bring in other areas, where we're essentially making up for the failures of private enterprise to provide security for those pensioners and those workers under their own retirement plans?

My colleague Paul Miller from Hamilton East–Stoney Creek has brought forward a bill in the last sitting of the House that called on this government to secure and augment the pension benefit guarantee to \$2,500 a month in that exact case: where corporations would declare bankruptcy and the fund set up under the pension benefit guarantee would enhance what their eligibility is.

It's something that is called on not only by those who have already been through this, such as Nortel workers—we know the experience that they've had through the insolvency and bankruptcy of the former Nortel—and it has also been called on by a lot of blue-collar workers in larger corporations who are vulnerable as well when large entities declare bankruptcy.

That's something that is an aside to what's happening here. Speaker, this bill as it is—and as it stands is, of course, the first of three parts of a bill that will eventually, potentially, probably, maybe bring about some form of a mechanism for people to have some semblance of retirement security—it is essentially a shell of a bill. It gives the government the ability to create an administration corporation.

What they have done is—and we read this in the recent budget—they will release an RFP to manage the Ontario Retirement Pension Plan. What does that mean for everyday Ontarians? An RFP—a request for proposals—has been sent out to, I guess, everyone; anyone who thinks that they have the abilities, the skills and the experience to manage a large pension plan. Who could that be? It very well could be the next Ornge, without the right oversight, without the right accountability.

I see members of the government shaking their heads, “No, no, no.” They don't think it could ever happen again, but the minister without portfolio, I think, fails to learn from his own mistakes and those of his government. As we have seen so many times, they are abdicating their responsibility to deliver effective policy and effective governance for the people of this province, and it is to the detriment of those who live here for them to not do the work that they are called on to do.

To outsource this most important role to private entities that will inevitably have their own agendas when given a large sum of money, when given management and power and control without oversight, without accountability—Speaker, this is an I-told-you-so moment. We are telling you: Do not do this. Take control, take ownership, take management, take responsibility.

If you're going to deliver such an integral component of the retirement security that people are counting on, that you campaigned on, then, by goodness, take responsibility for it; do it right. Take the consultation that you heard in the committee reports and the committee

travelling of this bill from experts in financial management who said, “You really shouldn't relinquish the control of such an important fund and what ultimately will be quite a large sum of money, given that 50% of eligible workers in the province will be contributing to it.” Inherently there's a problem there as well, because if it is truly to benefit the province at large, as the Canada Pension Plan does, being universal and being portable, it should have the most buy-in possible. But we've given a lot of outs, as it were, a lot of escape routes for many in private industry to not contribute to a plan that should be universal and should be accessible by all.

What we think is going to happen, Speaker, is that the government will deem comparable plans as being defined contribution plans, as opposed to what could be, and what we know to be, more beneficial to retirees: defined benefit plans. What we don't understand is how they can be comparable when defined contribution plans are at the whim of the market on many occasions and do not account for major losses in retirement security for the workers who contribute to them. So for them to be comparable is maybe a misnomer, but ultimately the government sees fit to allow that as an opt-out provision.

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The federal government should be playing a role here, there's no doubt. I don't think this government has imposed or attempted to impose the correct amount of pressure that they could on the federal government. We hear a little bit through the Finance Minister that they wish the federal government would be playing a bigger role. We do not hear that from their federal cousins in the Liberal Party—any type of pressure of that sort. We would imagine that they should be working in concert to try to take that road.

Imagine what the province of Ontario could do. Imagine what a majority government in the province of Ontario could do to leverage that type of pressure on the federal government. They haven't. We haven't seen anything. It's very unfortunate that we haven't used more effort to make that happen because we know that is the most efficient and effective vehicle for Ontarians and Canadians at large to be able to retire with dignity and security. The CPP is a massive fund. It is well regarded. It is globally recognized as being a force not only for retirement security, affordability and livability but also through the management provisions of the CPP.

Those are some of the questions that we have as well that don't exist in this shell of a bill, questions that we don't have answers to. What will those administration provisions be? Once you accept a RFP, how much is it going to cost us to manage this massive Ontario Retirement Pension Plan? We know that it's going to be a whole bunch. It's going to be a whole lot more, I think, than if you were to do it in-house.

Maybe, inherently, that is the difference ideologically between them and us. We actually think we can do it. We believe in some of those public sector managers out there that already—like the Ontario Teachers' Pension Plan; that is another globally regarded powerhouse that has

returned massive dividends to its shareholders and to its contributors, the teachers of this province. We think we could tap into that type of knowledge base. We think we can do it at less of a premium than what the government is ultimately doing.

If you look at the similarities between what they're doing with this and what they do with other components and other integral systems in the province, we've seen this plan play out. The wording might be different. The mechanics might be different. Of course, the issue is different. But ultimately, we see a government that continues to abdicate its responsibility, to outsource any involvement in the public sector and to relinquish control and oversight of important, vital components of our economy.

Why don't you believe in yourselves? Why can't you trust yourselves? I guess I don't blame you given your track record. What we think is that there is a better way to do this. There is a more effective and efficient way to do this.

Unfortunately, we're already seeing with this bill that you're heading down the wrong path. We see that many of the amendments that not only ourselves but the opposition PC Party put forward that may have been non-contentious—some of the ideas that came out of committee deliberations and committee testimony were completely ignored. You heard from experts. You heard from those who have seen these types of plans play out. However, we saw minimal amendments to Bill 56 that make it a broader, more fair and more efficient retirement savings vehicle.

We put forward our own plan, something that mirrored the Canada Pension Plan, something that was designed to be a defined benefit, something that was transparent, something that was accountable. We delivered a plan, as we always do, that is in stark contrast to what the government has done, because we know their track record. We know the track record of the Liberal government in managing important files. We see it each and every day in this place. It's too important to absolve yourself of that responsibility.

What we proposed has been very well articulated and very well presented. As we move further through the legislative process, we will be able to contrast what your ORPP—Ontario Retirement Pension Plan—will look like and what the New Democrat plan would look like, which would be universal, which would be defined-benefit and which would absolutely end up with the end goal of providing retirement security where there is a vacuum from the federal government.

What we've seen—

Mr. Percy Hatfield: Let's change the federal government.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: And we will. We're working, of course, towards the month of October to change the federal government.

You're doing this for a reason. You're doing this because you see that there is a need. But don't take half-measures. Where is this big Liberal government, big

Liberal vision that we used to hear so much of, the old days of the Liberals where they planned ahead, they had focus and they were big thinkers?

This is outsourcing your thought pattern. This is outsourcing any planning and it's abdicating responsibility instead of entrusting yourselves and those around you and the good work of the public service that has experience in this. It's heading to Bay Street to get your experience and to get policy, Speaker, where we don't think it's in the right direction.

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

Ms. Daiene Vernile: I'd like to thank the member for Essex for his comments on the ORPP. I would like to add my voice to this discussion today. The member for Essex did make some very positive comments on this proposed bill, in particular his comments on how our federal government should be playing a more prominent role. They, of course, should have beefed up the CPP. We have numerous provinces across Canada that have asked for the same thing, but in the absence of that, we are stepping forward. We are showing leadership and we are presenting this bill.

As you know, Mr. Speaker, this plan was part of the platform that we did run on last year. We won a majority mandate from Ontarians. This is an issue that concerns them very much. You also saw this again in our 2014 budget, which was passed in the House last July.

We know that retirement security is a top issue for Ontarians across the province. I can tell you that when I was knocking on doors in my riding, Kitchener Centre—and I counted; I knocked on 7,500 doors—I had lots of discussions with people about this very issue. That was over the course of 43 days. People were telling me that they're concerned not only about their retirement but also for their children and their grandchildren.

I can tell you also that the associate minister, while she was meeting with individuals, associations, businesses and labour, heard repeatedly how people are concerned that they may not have enough money on which to retire and that they might even outlive their retirement.

Without taking action today, many of today's workers are going to face a decline in their living standard in retirement, and that has the potential to stagnate our growth and create economic uncertainty well into the future. That is not good for business, for people or for our economy, and that's why we are taking action, addressing this important issue for now and far into the future.

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

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: It is with grave disappointment that I rise today to debate the Ontario pension plan. This Liberal government has the audacity to tell everyday Ontarians to send them more money for benefits that they may not ever, ever derive any benefit from.

Mr. Todd Smith: When will it end?

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: When will it end, Speaker?

This is a job-killing payroll tax which, by the government's own admission, will cause at least 55,000 private

sector jobs in the province of Ontario to be lost. In addition to that, as I've stated, there will be virtually few benefits derived by any senior who is living today and possibly even by my generation. Because I can tell you one thing: If this is a government that you cannot trust with Ornge, if this is a government that you cannot trust with eHealth, if this is a government that you can't trust at the OLG, or even to manage a by-election in Sudbury, why would you ask this Liberal government to look after your pension, your future, your security for retirement?

If there's one government in the country of Canada that can get pension planning right, it is the federal government under Stephen Harper that can get this right, by extending our ability for TFSAs.

I think, as do members of the Ontario Progressive Conservative caucus, that the best people to save for my retirement and for your retirement and my constituents' retirements are the people of this province. It certainly is not Kathleen Wynne and her Liberal government—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): I'd just like to remind the member that we don't call people by their first or last name. We refer to them by their title; in this case, it would be "the Premier." Thank you.

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Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Thank you, Speaker. I can just say this in my final seconds: Stephen Harper 1; Kathleen Wynne 0.

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

Mr. Percy Hatfield: It's always entertaining in this House to follow the member from Nepean–Carleton. Sometimes we agree; sometimes we disagree. I have to disagree with much of what she just said because we in the third party do not see this as a tax.

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: It is.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: No. If this is a tax, then the Canada Pension Plan is a tax, and I do not believe that you think the Canada Pension Plan is a tax.

You like to say what a great job your Conservative cousins are doing on Parliament Hill in Ottawa. But it's your Conservative cousins on Parliament Hill in Ottawa who took the normal average retirement age of 65 and raised it to 67. That is wrong; dead wrong. What should be done is, your Conservative cousins in Ottawa should bring it back down. If it's 65, then bring it down below 65. Don't leave it at 67. Don't call this a tax. This is not a tax.

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: I'm going to call it a tax.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: You can call it what you want. I think that most people in Ontario, most people in this Legislature, don't see this as a tax. They see it somewhat as a necessity because, as we know, most of the people in Ontario don't have a pension plan or don't have a very good pension plan. I agree with option A: Increase the CPP. Whatever party, and I hope it's the New Democrats and Tom Mulcair, forms the next government in Canada in October, I think they're going to fix the CPP problem.

Interjection.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: I don't think it's going to be a Conservative government, because they have smashed the CPP by putting people up to 67. They should enhance the CPP, Speaker; then we would not be here arguing this today. The problem would be fixed in Ottawa.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further questions and comments. The member from Ottawa South.

Interjection: Say something nice, John.

Mr. John Fraser: I'll try.

It's always hard to follow the member from Nepean–Carleton and the member from Windsor–Tecumseh in succession. I do have to say that I wholeheartedly agree with you, except for the Tom Mulcair part. It is not a tax.

I think that the member from Windsor–Essex and I share the fact that enhancing the CPP is probably the single most important thing the current federal government could do to help Canadians—the single most important thing. The real fact of the matter is that they won't even talk about thinking about doing it. What they're saying is, "We don't think that that's necessary." I believe that that's wrong. I believe most people in this Legislature in all parties know that.

I very much appreciated the comments from the member from Nepean–Carleton and her passion and her fervour. I would like to suggest that she use that passion and fervour to engage her federal cousins in that discussion and debate. It could be helpful.

The member from Windsor–Essex said earlier that we haven't been working hard enough. It's pretty hard when the finance minister says, "That's a problem for our grandchildren." Climate change: "That's a problem for our grandchildren." How do you talk to people like that? How do you talk to people who don't believe that we have some responsibility to those people who come after us? How do you have that conversation?

The member from Essex: I appreciate his comments very much. I don't agree with all of them.

Getting back to the track record, I'll say 4 and 0. That's the track record. That's not said in a cocky way. I just want to say that we have got a lot of things right, and we've worked very hard.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Back to the member from Essex for his final comments.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Thank you very much, Speaker.

Thanks, of course, to the member from Nepean–Carleton, to the member from Windsor–Tecumseh and to the member from Ottawa South.

The issue of pensions is not a new one for New Democrats. In fact, in this country, we practically invented the whole mechanism of public pensions here, one that is in place and has been in place for so long. I challenge you to make any overtures, whether provincial or federal, to dismantle what is our universal Canada Pension Plan.

Why does it work? Because it makes sense. It's something that provides that security. Why does it make sense? Because we did it right. The provisions built into

the Canada Pension Plan were right. Of course, the federal government, under Stephen Harper, has been attempting to dismantle, as the Republicans in the United States, the Tea Partiers, will attempt to dismantle—

Applause.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Don't applaud, Minister, because you're in the same realm. You are one penny on that side of the fence. You do not have the moral courage or fortitude to enact the provisions that will afford for retirement security. You listen too much to your Bay Street buddies. They influence your party too much in the policies that you bring to this House.

Interjections.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: To give your head a shake is something that I think is an appropriate response, because that is what your government has done and continues to do.

If you had the courage, you would look at some of the plans that we've put forward in the amendments to this bill. Unfortunately, you can't, because you play both sides of the fence. It is where you lie ideologically; I will not fault you for that. But I'll tell you, when it does end up being a failure in policy and doesn't deliver the results that you're looking for, you will have to look in the mirror and say: "We could have done more. We should have done more. We should have listened to the NDP the whole time."

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Order, please. Further debate.

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: It's a pleasure to join the debate on Bill 56 and put a proper perspective on things. Again, just to revisit, Bill 56 is called the Ontario Retirement Pension Plan Act, 2015. As many of my colleagues have already made very clear, I just want to reiterate the fact that we are not supporting this particular bill, the Ontario Retirement Pension Plan Act.

In part, we feel that we need to trust Ontarians to get it right and trust them to save for their own retirement. Definitely, this is important because we do not have any trust in this Liberal government. They are forever dipping their hands into Ontarians' pockets.

Just yesterday, we were seeing very clearly that they're doing everything within their majority power to eliminate oversight. We could talk about that to a great extent, but I want to talk to the fact that, just moments ago, we heard from both the NDP and the Liberals that this is not a payroll tax. Well, Speaker, I have to tell you that I reached out to the small businesses in my riding, and I will touch specifically on a letter that was sent back to me that is totally to the contrary.

Where will businesses be able to find an additional 1.9% revenue to support their mandatory contributions to the ORPP when we have the highest North American hydro rates, as well as a government that is choosing to continue to pump up the rates as of May 1? It's going up a whopping 15%, and that's not acceptable—up to 16 cents per kilowatt hour during peak production.

Hon. James J. Bradley: You're making that up.

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: No, we cannot make this up. Sadly, people are afraid of what it's going to take to actually survive this Liberal government.

Let's go back to the payroll tax, to be specific. Employees will see less money in their pockets, and as I mentioned before, employers' cost of business will go up.

Internal government documents have warned that the province will lose 18,000 jobs for every \$2 billion collected. It will hurt people who live paycheque to paycheque.

Coming back to hydro rates, even municipalities now are writing to LDCs, saying, "Please, stop cutting hydro off during winter months." You know there's a problem across Ontario when this is happening.

Again, the more you lose in payroll tax from both the employee and employer side of the business, there's less take-home pay for groceries and rent, and ultimately fewer jobs.

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It's policies like this Liberal one that hold Ontario back and, as I said before, drive jobs away. That's why, in part, when I reflect on this bill and compare it to Bill 57, we were supportive of Bill 57. My colleague from York-Simcoe did a wonderful job explaining the difference between Bill 57 and Bill 56. I sum it up by saying: You know what? It's good to support Bill 57, the pooled pension plans that are mobile, because guess what, Speaker? We are losing more and more people out of this province every day, and at least Bill 57 allows them to take their pensions with them.

Again, the difference between 57 and 56 in terms of bills is that Bill 56 will hurt people who live paycheque to paycheque and its policies are going to see further skyrocketing energy rates from this Liberal government. We have policies that are introducing new taxes. We have policies from this government that are introducing crushing red tape. Sadly, it almost seems like this is becoming the norm. But what can never, ever be the norm in this province is the gouging of Ontario's taxpayers. I would dare say that the PC Party of Ontario is the only party that stands up for both business and taxpayers.

Let's think about this a little bit further. All of the Liberal norms that are coming at us left, right and centre are making a very unattractive climate for businesses to come to Ontario. I meet with stakeholders day in and day out, and they're saying it's becoming a great worry because the stability of Ontario, which once catapulted this province to be the economic engine of Confederation, is actually weakening every time they turn around. It's scaring businesses to look on the other side of the border.

Another example of driving people out of this province would be the additional tax on aviation fuel, but that can be a discussion for another day.

Going back to the ORPP, we're seeing the policies to be very irresponsible. Something that mimics irresponsible policies is the carbon tax known as cap and trade. Again, we're seeing all of this nonsense come out of the

Liberal government that is making it tougher to be in Ontario every day.

When I was first elected MPP for Huron–Bruce, I set out to stand up for the taxpayers of this province. Unfortunately, over the last three and a half years, I have seen time and again fiscal mismanagement and scandals and, ultimately, hardship for Ontarians. That is the norm of the Liberal government. They have scandal after scandal. They mismanage files like eHealth. They introduce taxes that do not go to help front-line health care, such as the health premium tax; it just goes into general coffers. It's just another example of how they gouge and gouge, and Ontarians are becoming exhausted. All of these new taxes the Liberals are implementing are crippling our economy, and it makes it harder to live, work and raise a family.

The Canadian Federation of Independent Business has come out strongly against the proposed ORPP on behalf of their members, stating that 86% of small business owners surveyed did not support the plan. What's more concerning is that 69% of these owners would freeze or cut salaries, and 53% would reduce their number of employees if the plan was implemented.

When is this government going to wake up? They have destroyed this province, and they seem to be enjoying stomping all over hard-working Ontarians.

In terms of driving out of Ontario, another fact that can't be overlooked is that given the misplaced policies and their desperate attempts to grab onto tax whenever possible, we've seen 300,000 manufacturing jobs leave this province. Most recently, in eastern Ontario, we just heard that Goodyear is going to be closing up shop as well. It's just the most recent example of how the Premier's government is making it unattractive for business to come and confidently stay in this province, which is a very, very sad state of affairs.

And you know what? It doesn't stop there. This is the worrisome part. This government is so cash-strapped, they're reaching and pulling at every possible little thread in that pocket of the Ontario taxpayer, because as you know, later this fall, we're going to learn more about a disastrous attempt to tax everything in this province. That policy, that program, is coined as cap and trade, but we know the reality is it's a carbon tax. It's a tax on everything.

You could also suggest that on the flipside of the coin, it's an opportunity for carbon polluters to pay to pollute. So it's not going to derive the result that everybody needs, which is ultimately a reduction of emissions.

Going back to the carbon tax for one more second, many groups have raised concerns with the carbon tax implementation, including the Canadian Manufacturers and Exporters, who—

Ms. Daiene Vernile: A point of order, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Excuse me. I recognize the member from Kitchener Centre on a point of order.

Ms. Daiene Vernile: The intention of the debate right now is supposed to be about the ORPP, not what the member is discussing.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Thank you. I've been listening carefully and she is bringing it around. I'll just remind the member to ensure that we are, in fact, addressing the bill.

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: Thank you very much, and I am coming back around to it because it's an example of how this government continues to introduce failed policy and disastrous stress on the burdens of Ontarians.

I just wanted to point out that the Canadian Manufacturers and Exporters expressed that "it will also be critical that Ontario not act unilaterally. Failure to act in parallel on a North American basis" with regard to a carbon tax "would put Ontario manufacturers at a significant competitive disadvantage." That is the common thread that I wanted to touch on: Ontarians indeed are at a disadvantage, even with this ORPP.

I have been a strong advocate against implementing a carbon tax, which will inevitably increase the cost of everything, as I said, and contribute to losing high-paying jobs. It's a rather rich irony here, Speaker, because what's going to happen here is—this government is cash-strapped, so it's introducing an ORPP to generate a new stream of revenue. But guess what? They're going to be driving so many jobs out of this province because of their other ill-conceived notions and taxes. Again, they're going to fall flat and fail. It's going to be a go, let me tell you that.

This government guesses that gas will increase, with a carbon tax, by three cents—another stress on business and on our taxpayers. Add that to the ORPP, and there's yet another finger digging into that pocket.

In rural and northern Ontario, I have to say, we don't have a lot of options to commute to jobs. We need jobs in our small towns. I just can't stress enough that the only option after a mandatory ORPP comes into place in small-town Ontario is for employers to try to save as much money as possible. This job tax is going to come directly out of their bottom line, and there's not a lot of line left, if you will, Speaker. Because of that, we are going to see further erosion of our small towns.

Because of this, families are going to be feeling it the most. Families are the ones that don't have the opportunity to pick up and move, go across to the States or go out west, because they've got their roots planted in Ontario, and they're going to struggle. They really don't have any alternatives.

In terms of alternatives, it's frustrating when you think about the five budget asks that we presented to the Ontario Liberal government. We presented alternatives for them to consider to rein in their spending and to make life a little bit easier for Ontarians. Simply, the five items that we presented were all reasonable, sensible solutions to the challenges Ontarians are facing today. Sadly, the Liberal government turns a blind eye. They don't care about sensible solutions. They know they're cash-strapped, and they're just going to dig as far as they can, with new taxes and new regulations that ultimately have negative effects.

Sadly, none of our suggestions were taken into consideration. I just want to review them so that the Ontario

taxpayer knows that it was the PC Party that truly was standing up for them. Simply, one of our suggestions was to cancel the carbon tax. Another was to cancel the ORPP to ensure business can and will grow in Ontario.

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However, instead of allowing business to grow, the government decided instead to move forward and force employers to compensate for the higher costs with fewer employees. The ORPP will force employers, as I said, to raise prices and cut staff—the list goes on and on. Employers will have to reduce their workforce, as I mentioned, because they can't afford future wage increases. This is not what businesses want in Ontario.

In my riding of Huron–Bruce, small business is big business. It accounts for thousands of jobs and our revenue in our communities. I really commend a bright group of people that have been pulled together by the county of Huron into a Huron county economic development board. They want young people to come back to jobs in our county of Huron. They want people to flourish and bring in jobs to keep people, specifically young people, in our riding. You know what? They're frustrated because, at every turn, Liberals continue to introduce new taxes and new policies that strip them of their enthusiasm and their entrepreneurial spirit; it's like one step forward and five back. Hurting the job creators is the last thing this province needs right now.

The pension worry is shared, as I said, by the Canadian Federation of Independent Business, which actually represents, as I've mentioned before—and this is important to remember—97% of small businesses.

Mr. Todd Smith: The chamber of commerce doesn't like it.

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: No, the chamber of commerce doesn't like it either. That's right. We need to be doing everything we can to make it easier.

Ontario is becoming less and less competitive. I want to share with you a letter that I received from one of the businesses in my riding. Again, it's interesting: Just moments ago, we heard from both the third party and the governing party that the ORPP is not a tax. Well, after I read this letter, even small business calls it a tax, and it's something that everybody needs to tune into.

Mr. Todd Smith: Let's hear it. Tell us.

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: "Hi Lisa,

"I saw your letter to business owners through the Saugeen Shores chamber. I just want to add my thoughts. I have no problem with an optional retirement plan being developed that allows employees to decide"—if they can contribute, if they can afford to contribute or even want to contribute. An optional initiative would also allow "business owners to easily submit the deductions on behalf of the employees.

"What I do have an issue with is the idea of something becoming 'mandatory' and of the planned requirement for employer contributions. The more employers have to contribute on top of salary, the smaller the salaries are going to be. I can share that I have been keeping wages somewhat lower out of concern that once such a plan

goes in, I will be required to pay that much more for the same employee for the same hour. Every time employers are required to submit additional funds of their own, it just feels like a tax"—

Mr. John Yakabuski: It is a tax.

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: It's a tax for hiring people.

"I think the intended approach puts job creation at risk—both from what I hear from other business owners and how I myself view it. I sincerely hope that the proposal as it stands does not go forward.

"I did not vote for the Liberals in the last election, largely on the basis of not wanting this to go through."

Her name is Karen; she's lead counsel at Jacques Law, Litigation, Dispute Resolution and Workplace Safety Law, in Kincardine.

Speaker, this isn't the only correspondence I've received in this regard. Another constituent wrote me on behalf of his company, Edward Fuels, expressing his dissatisfaction with the impending mandatory Liberal Ontario Retirement Pension Plan and its implications for small business. He went on to explain that "the definition of a 'comparable' retirement plan has become a source of contention, with many plans not being considered within the 'exemption' guidelines." Needless to say, it is quite clear that businesses in my riding and across this province are not supportive of the ORPP.

Speaker, this is where I need to challenge the government of the day. Facts speak for themselves, and I worry that this government is not consulting. We saw it with the carbon tax. We saw it with the neonics. They have not consulted time and again. Even with Bill 45, I was asking stakeholders who had taken time to create and provide submissions and to come forward to testify—I asked them, "Did this government reach out to you regarding Bill 45?" They said, "No. They did not consult with us." It's a trend that's infuriating. It's time that this government wakes up and starts working with Ontarians as opposed to dictating tax after tax after tax.

This Liberal government claims that people are not saving enough for their retirement. Well, for goodness' sakes, people can't save enough because they're taking every possible quarter and penny out of their pocket through tax after tax after tax.

From 1990 to 2008, Ontario had the highest saving rate of all provinces in Canada. Currently, Ontario sits at the national average. The people who are struggling in pension years are often single, elderly individuals who have never worked and only receive 60% of their spouse's CPP. These people are on limited resources, yet this government keeps driving the cost of living up, not giving a hoot about how people are trying to scrape just to get by. This is unacceptable. Sadly enough, this new tax that's going to drive up the cost of groceries and drive up the cost of doing business is going to cause them to experience more expense when they're already finding it tough to make ends meet. It's unacceptable.

If this government had a more accountable and transparent energy policy as well as tax policy, and opened themselves up to consultation to see, really and

truly, how hard-hit Ontarians are today in 2015, maybe—just maybe—they would actually slow down on their tax-and-spend ways.

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

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: One of the things I agree on with my colleague from the Conservative Party is that people are finding it very difficult to make ends meet. That's definitely a problem, and we need to address it. How is this budget doing that?

First and foremost, we have to address the fact that this government has very loudly and very boldly declared that they were a progressive government. During their budget, they discussed the fact that they were a progressive government. If we look at what they're doing in the budget and we look at what they're doing with pensions, it's very interesting if we look at their priorities. First and foremost, they have a privatization agenda. They have an agenda around cutting services.

With respect to the pension plan: When we absolutely need a pension plan, we absolutely need a plan that assists people to live in dignity as they age and we need to ensure that people are able to retire with grace, we're seeing this government's priorities. The government has prioritized a particular form of retirement plan which is going to benefit bankers and Bay Street, but they're not prioritizing a plan that would actually benefit day-to-day workers in giving them a guaranteed and reliable source of income.

There is a very interesting approach that this government is taking. They're prioritizing and moving very quickly to implement a plan that is not reliable, that is going to be subject to the whim of the markets, and they're moving very slowly on a plan that would be more reliable, on a plan that actually would benefit the workers of Ontario, that would actually benefit Ontarians. This priority is something we want to question. Is this government truly acting in a progressive manner when they are not putting enough attention into the type of pension that would actually benefit people in a meaningful way but instead are looking to assist some of their, perhaps, friends in the banking and financial sector that might benefit from the other sort of pension plan? That's something we need to look at.

I think what we're seeing very clearly is that this government is not the progressive government they've made themselves out to be.

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

Hon. James J. Bradley: I, first of all, want to congratulate the member for Bramalea–Gore–Malton on being chosen as the deputy leader. All this time, I thought the member for Kitchener–Waterloo was the deputy leader of the New Democratic Party, and now I find out it's the best-dressed member in the Legislature himself, the member for Bramalea–Gore–Malton. But he did have some appropriate comments about the previous speaker.

My goal is to bring the Conservative Party into the 21st century. I suggested the 19th century; I was cor-

rected. A member for southwestern Ontario, who will go unnamed, suggested it was really the 20th century that they're in because they're anti-environment. If you have any environmental issues—all the questions that come in around the environment. They're anti-pension plan. They're anti-everything that's progressive.

1750

So I don't know why they have the name—you may wonder about this, Mr. Speaker; you're neutral in the Chair. Why would they have the name "Progressive Conservative" anymore? I remember when the member for Renfrew South, the father of the present member from Barry's Bay, was here. It was genuinely a Progressive Conservative Party at that time. Now we find it's deteriorated considerably into a Tea Party rump. Back to this—

Interjections.

Hon. James J. Bradley: Back to the actual comments that were made. Everybody in this House, I think, agrees that this matter could be best addressed if we had a progressive federal government which would enhance the CPP. They're not prepared to do that, so on behalf of working people in this province, we are putting this forward. We think it will be beneficial.

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

Mr. Todd Smith: I'm pleased to join the debate this afternoon. The speaker from Huron–Bruce was absolutely correct when she said that this is a tax. I know that's something that this government doesn't want to admit.

What was most ludicrous last week after the budget was delivered, Mr. Speaker, was when the Premier stood up and said that this was a budget that didn't include any tax, that there were no tax increases in this budget. There are at least five I can count in this budget. There's a new tax on beer. There's a new tax on carbon, which is going to be a tax on everything, gasoline; that's called the cap-and-trade, which is included in the budget. The aviation fuel tax is going up in the province. Of course, don't forget about this payroll tax in the Ontario Retirement Pension Plan. It's a tax on every business, and it's a tax on all the employees at those businesses as well: 1.9%. Businesses can't afford it.

You know why the federal government won't increase the CPP? It's because of this pathetic government of the last 12 years in Ontario that's dragging the national economy down because they can't get their act together.

We're bleeding jobs in Ontario, and what does this government do? They want to be a bigger albatross around the neck of Ontario businesses by bringing in more taxes. I cannot believe that this government can't get its head out of the sand and do what's right and start to create jobs in this province, not try and do everything they can to drive them out of the province.

The ORPP is a payroll tax—bottom line. There's no question about it. We used to call Dalton "the Tax Man;" I'm not exactly sure what we're going to call Kathleen Wynne, the new Premier, but we'll come up with some moniker. Bottom line—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): I'd just like to remind the member from Prince Edward–Hastings that when you refer to people by first and last name, it's not acceptable. We must refer to them by their title; therefore, the reference would be to the Premier.

Further questions and comments.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: Well, Speaker, I guess we're getting late in the day. I don't know if the pages were handing out Valium earlier, but if they did, they missed one of our members. Maybe it's time that we all just chilled out a little bit in the House this afternoon.

I rise on behalf of the people who sent me from Windsor–Tecumseh to make comments on Bill 56. I know the member for Huron–Bruce was also talking about Bill 56 and Bill 57. I don't mind Bill 56; Bill 57, personally, I don't like. It's sort of like, "We don't have enough money to put into RRSPs on our own, so we'll put it in a pooled plan, the Bill 57 plan, and pay big commissions to the bankers and the insurance companies, and hope that the market doesn't crash and we're left with nothing." So I do have some problems with that.

But I must admire the passion that the member for Huron–Bruce brings to her debates in this House. Sometimes she's moved to tears because of the passion of representing the people of Huron–Bruce, especially when it comes to the wind farms and other obstacles in her riding.

Interjections.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: I'm not sure what the member from Nepean–Carleton is saying at the moment, if it had something to do with the Ottawa Senators losing last night or if it was something about the Go, Habs, go! sign she held up earlier. She does have interjections when we speak to this bill, Speaker, Bill 56—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): I remind the member that we are talking about this bill and not anything else.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: Thank you, Speaker. At this hour of the day, I think the debate is winding down, just as it is winding down in this government.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Back to the member from Huron–Bruce for final comments.

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: I appreciate the spirited comments from the members from Bramalea–Gore–Malton, St. Catharines, Prince Edward–Hastings and Windsor–Tecumseh.

You know, the member from Windsor–Tecumseh said that sometimes you can be brought to tears in this House. Certainly the people who are going to be crying after the ORPP comes into fruition will be small businesses across Ontario, because time and again, we're trying to get through to this government once and for all that they just can't handle any more tax stress.

I wanted to wrap up by sharing some comments from the Ontario Chamber of Commerce. They went on to say that it's clear that this proposal, as it stands now, not only undermines existing retirement savings, but it would force additional contributions on a large segment of the population who—you know what?—really can't afford it. Again, coming back to the chamber, their main concerns

are: increased costs for businesses—that there is not actually an undersaving problem in the province; we have an overspending government, Speaker.

Another concern that the chamber noted was that the clawbacks to Old Age Security and guaranteed income security will have negative effects on Ontario's poor. They also mentioned that there will be many unintended consequences of the ORPP, including layoffs, hiring freezes and cancellation of other retirement programs. They noted that the current retirement programs already provide more in savings than the ORPP ever will and that the definition of "comparable" is far too restrictive. Again, I'll repeat that: that the definition of "comparable" is too restrictive.

And, like everything else this Liberal government does, there's no economic analysis of the pension plan. That happens time and time again. This Liberal government does not take the time to do a cost-benefit analysis on any initiative or tax that they introduce, and they never consult. As a result, we're going to continue to spiral downwards.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): I'd like to thank all members for a lively debate this afternoon.

Third reading debate deemed adjourned.

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

ADJOURNMENT DEBATE

RETAIL ALCOHOL SALES VENTE D'ALCOOL AU DÉTAIL

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): The member for Leeds–Grenville has given notice of dissatisfaction with the answer to a question given by the Premier. The member has up to five minutes to debate the matter, and the parliamentary assistant to the Premier may reply for up to five minutes.

I recognize the member from Leeds–Grenville.

Mr. Steve Clark: I'm pleased to again highlight the inequity at the heart of this government's beer sales reform plan.

In my question to the Premier last week, I said that her motivation is obvious. Giving licences to 450 grocery stores to stock beer is just a distraction—what we call in political circles a channel changer. It's designed to take the public's attention off the real problems a government faces. In this case, this government needs a lot of channel changers because there are so many problems.

But it really says something about their incompetence when they can't even manage a channel changer properly. That's because their beer sales plan shuts out every Ontarian in a rural community or a small town or city. No grocery store in a community with a population under 30,000 can bid on a licence. Rural Ontario loses out again with this government.

I'm glad the parliamentary assistant to the Premier is here. I want him to explain to the people of Leeds–

Grenville why they're good enough to pay your \$100-million beer tax but get none of your licences. That's the fundamental inequity that we've got here today. You're digging deeper into our pockets, but we're getting nothing in return. It's like it's happy hour for your tax-and-spend cabinet but not for the people that I represent.

1800

This isn't about the convenience of picking up a six-pack at the grocery store; it's about economic development, job creation and the viability of our rural communities.

I know it's hard for this government to understand, but not everyone in Ontario happens to live in a city of over 30,000. I welcome the member for Etobicoke North to come to Leeds–Grenville this summer. We can take a tour, and I can show you the great things that are happening in my small communities. Maybe then he'll understand why entrepreneurs in those communities are so frustrated with this plan: They can compete with any business anywhere in the province, but the Premier says they can't because their store is located in the wrong part of Ontario.

In the question, I mentioned Neil Kudrinko, owner of Kudrinko's Fresh Mart in Westport. Neil and I have talked many times about the great opportunity a licence would create for his store. It would make it more of a destination for customers seeking a unique shopping experience. This man is an innovative forward-thinker. He's an award winner, and I know that he knows how to make his community prosper. Neil can't expand and hire new staff. It's little wonder he described the government's plan as "a mess from day one" in a local newspaper article.

I also mentioned what a licence would mean to Lynn Laming, owner of Kitley Grocery in Toledo. After asking my question, I heard from Greg Williams, a neighbour of Lynn's shop. He wrote to me and said how shocked he was at the Premier's response and how little she knows about rural Ontario. Here's what Greg wrote:

"She stated she did not want them in the rural areas because it may cause the Beer Store to close down. Has she ever been to a rural Beer Store? My closest Beer Store is Smiths Falls, 21 kilometres away, next Brockville, 29 kilometres away.

"How would Kitley Grocery, if given the right to sell beer, have much of an effect on these stores closing?"

Greg is right. The competition wouldn't close Beer Stores or LCBOs. The Premier's response is a smoke-screen.

And it's not just rural communities in my riding being left with an empty mug. The same day I asked my question, it was reported that the Beer Store in downtown Brockville is closing at year's end. I'm hoping that the city's economic development department will work with me and TBS to find a new downtown location. But here's the point: In the comment section of the online story, people said it's no big deal because the Metro grocery store up the street will soon be selling beer. Well, these folks are in for a shock, because it's not going to happen.

Brockville's population is under 30,000, so the Premier says we don't make the grade.

Premier Wynne claims I want to hand a licence to every store in the province. She's wrong, and I hope her PA won't use that nonsense in his talking points today. What I want is a fair system for those 450 licences. What I want is respect for entrepreneurs and consumers. It's a far better recipe for success than allowing governments to pick winners and losers.

This is a very fundamental question for the parliamentary assistant. It's a question of fairness for rural Ontario. So I ask the Premier's parliamentary assistant to put away his talking points, save some time and make a simple commitment to me and members on this side of the House: Tell them you'll stop playing postal code politics with your beer sales plan. Please go back to the drawing board, come up with a level playing field, and let's grow the economy in every corner of Ontario.

I look forward to the parliamentary assistant's answer to my questions.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Over to the parliamentary assistant to the Premier.

Mr. Shafiq Qaadri: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. First of all, it is past the witching hour of 6 p.m. I commend all the individuals who are here as the core group of Parliament: you in the chair; the honourable Steve Clark, House leader of the opposition party; Mr. Edward Ashimi, our cruise director in the corner over there.

I will take you, sir, at your word—the sincerity and the intensity that you deliver it. I think this place is a place where we can agree to respectfully disagree. I will accept your call, your challenge; I will aspire not to use nonsense. Perhaps it will be judged either in the press or by your committee team tomorrow whether it was or was not nonsense, but I hope whatever remarks I'm about to offer—I'm not generally in the habit of offering nonsense unless, I suppose, that's the goal.

Having said that, I would simply also say that our values, perhaps, our feelings, our research on it, what we want to do for the province of Ontario, differ from you, and I think that, of course, plays itself out on a daily basis, whether it's in question period or elsewhere.

As for your call or your invitation to come to Leeds–Grenville, I think it's very much the process and procedure of this place that any bill that is contentious, that has geographic specificity, that may not play well in Peoria, that has a different rural or urban split—those types of bills do travel.

Having travelled all across this province, perhaps not as rurally as you would like, but as, for example, Chair of the justice policy committee, Chair of social policy—always, by the way, more or less, I think, as Chair, since I've been here, 12 or 13 years, I have travelled endlessly across Ontario. Hopefully, I think, at least some of those areas were, in fact, rural.

Monsieur le Président, notre gouvernement est fier d'avoir introduit une initiative représentant le changement le plus marquant dans la vente d'alcool en Ontario depuis près de 90 ans. Nous avons écouté les consommateurs et

leur offrons plus de choix et de flexibilité. Ces changements sont le reflet de ce que les Ontariens veulent. This change reflects what Ontarians want.

Pour la première fois dans l'histoire de l'Ontario, la bière sera vendue dans les épiceries—450 nouveaux points de vente, 150 d'ici le 1^{er} mai 2017. En gros, il s'agit du même nombre de Beer Store en opération aujourd'hui.

De plus, nous allons mener des projets pilotes dans 10 magasins LCBO où des caisses de 12 bières seront mises en vente—450 new locations, 150 stores by May 1, 2017. That's roughly the same number of Beer Store outlets that exist today. In addition, in 10 LCBO stores we'll run pilots where 12-packs can be sold.

En étendant la vente de bière aux épiceries, nous offrons plus de choix et plus de flexibilité aux consommateurs.

Le processus final pour l'obtention des licences ou autres permissions comportera différentes considérations, incluant de s'assurer d'une valeur équitable pour les clients, répondre à la demande le mieux possible, s'assurer d'une compétition juste, éviter la trop grande concentration et servir les communautés à travers la province, tout en continuant d'adhérer aux principes de responsabilité sociale.

The final process for awarding licences or other permissions will balance a host of considerations, including how to secure good value, best meet demands, ensure fair competition, avoid undue concentration and serve communities across the province, rural as well as urban.

It's something I support, not only as the parliamentary assistant to the Premier, not only as the Chair of justice policy, not only as the representative of Etobicoke North, but also, of course, in my capacity as a physician: adhering to the principles of social responsibility.

I appreciate that the table officers are appreciating my remarks as well.

Ceci permet au Beer Store de revenir plus près de ses racines de coopérative en s'ouvrant davantage à tous les brasseurs ayant des établissements de production en Ontario et en intégrant mieux les intérêts de parties prenantes clés, incluant les brasseurs—petits et grands—les restaurants, les propriétaires de bars, et, évidemment, les consommateurs de bière.

Speaker, it's a deep issue. The remarks are only five minutes. We look forward to doing more in committee.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Since there are no further late shows, this House is deemed adjourned until tomorrow at 9 o'clock.

The House adjourned at 1809.

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

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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	
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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	

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Flynn, Hon. / L'hon. Kevin Daniel (LIB)	Oakville	Minister of Labour / Ministre du Travail
Forster, Cindy (NDP)	Welland	
Fraser, John (LIB)	Ottawa South / Ottawa-Sud	
French, Jennifer K. (NDP)	Oshawa	
Gates, Wayne (NDP)	Niagara Falls	
Gélinas, France (NDP)	Nickel Belt	
Gravelle, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Thunder Bay–Superior North / Thunder Bay–Superior-Nord	Minister of Northern Development and Mines / Ministre du Développement du Nord et des Mines
Gretzky, Lisa (NDP)	Windsor West / Windsor-Ouest	
Hardeman, Ernie (PC)	Oxford	
Harris, Michael (PC)	Kitchener–Conestoga	
Hatfield, Percy (NDP)	Windsor–Tecumseh	
Hillier, Randy (PC)	Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington	
Hoggarth, Ann (LIB)	Barrie	
Horwath, Andrea (NDP)	Hamilton Centre / Hamilton-Centre	Leader, Recognized Party / Chef de parti reconnu Leader, New Democratic Party of Ontario / Chef du Nouveau parti démocratique de l'Ontario
Hoskins, Hon. / L'hon. Eric (LIB)	St. Paul's	Minister of Health and Long-Term Care / Ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée
Hudak, Tim (PC)	Niagara West–Glanbrook / Niagara- Ouest–Glanbrook	
Hunter, Hon. / L'hon. Mitzie (LIB)	Scarborough–Guildwood	Associate Minister of Finance (Ontario Retirement Pension Plan) / Ministre associée des Finances (Régime de retraite de la province de l'Ontario)
Jaczek, Hon. / L'hon. Helena (LIB)	Oak Ridges–Markham	Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille Minister of Community and Social Services / Ministre des Services sociaux et communautaires
Jones, Sylvia (PC)	Dufferin–Caledon	
Kiwala, Sophie (LIB)	Kingston and the Islands / Kingston et les Îles	
Kwinter, Monte (LIB)	York Centre / York-Centre	
Lalonde, Marie-France (LIB)	Ottawa–Orléans	
Leal, Hon. / L'hon. Jeff (LIB)	Peterborough	Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs / Ministre de l'Agriculture, de l'Alimentation et des Affaires rurales
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
Mauro, Hon. / L'hon. Bill (LIB)	Thunder Bay–Atikokan	Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry / Ministre des Richesses naturelles et des Forêts
McDonell, Jim (PC)	Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry	
McGarry, Kathryn (LIB)	Cambridge	
McMahon, Eleanor (LIB)	Burlington	
McMeekin, Hon. / L'hon. Ted (LIB)	Ancaster–Dundas–Flamborough– Westdale	Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / Ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement
McNaughton, Monte (PC)	Lambton–Kent–Middlesex	
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 Deputy Leader, Recognized Party / Chef adjoint du gouvernement
Singh, Jagmeet (NDP)	Bramalea–Gore–Malton	
Smith, Todd (PC)	Prince Edward–Hastings	
Sousa, Hon. / L'hon. Charles (LIB)	Mississauga South / Mississauga-Sud	Minister of Finance / Ministre des Finances
Tabuns, Peter (NDP)	Toronto–Danforth	
Takhar, Harinder S. (LIB)	Mississauga–Erindale	
Taylor, Monique (NDP)	Hamilton Mountain	
Thibeault, Glenn (LIB)	Sudbury	
Thompson, Lisa M. (PC)	Huron–Bruce	
Vanthof, John (NDP)	Timiskaming–Cochrane	
Vernile, Daiene (LIB)	Kitchener Centre / Kitchener-Centre	
Walker, Bill (PC)	Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound	
Wilson, Jim (PC)	Simcoe–Grey	Leader, Official Opposition / Chef de l'opposition officielle
Wong, Soo (LIB)	Scarborough–Agincourt	
Wynne, Hon. / L'hon. Kathleen O. (LIB)	Don Valley West / Don Valley-Ouest	Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs / Ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales Premier / Première ministre Leader, Liberal Party of Ontario / Chef du Parti libéral de l'Ontario
Yakabuski, John (PC)	Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke	
Yurek, Jeff (PC)	Elgin–Middlesex–London	
Zimmer, Hon. / L'hon. David (LIB)	Willowdale	Minister of Aboriginal Affairs / Ministre des Affaires autochtones

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Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Monique Taylor
Bas Balkissoon, Chris Ballard
Grant Crack, Cheri DiNovo
Han Dong, Michael Harris
Randy Hillier, Sophie Kiwala
Monique Taylor
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Katch Koch

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Comité permanent des finances et des affaires économiques**

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Laura Albanese, Yvan Baker
Victor Fedeli, Catherine Fife
Ann Hoggarth, Monte McNaughton
Peter Z. Milczyn, Daiene Vernile
Soo Wong
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Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Joe Dickson
Mike Colle, Grant Crack
Joe Dickson, Lisa Gretzky
Ann Hoggarth, Sophie Kiwala
Eleanor McMahon, Lisa M. Thompson
Jeff Yurek
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Sylwia Przewdziecki

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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

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la justice**

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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

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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**

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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**

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Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Kathryn McGarry
Robert Bailey, Lorenzo Berardinetti
Jennifer K. French, Monte Kwinter
Amrit Mangat, Kathryn McGarry
Indira Naidoo-Harris, Daiene Vernile
Bill Walker
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Valerie Quioc Lim

**Standing Committee on Social Policy / Comité permanent de
la politique sociale**

Chair / Président: Peter Tabuns
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Jagmeet Singh
Granville Anderson, Vic Dhillon
Christine Elliott, Marie-France Lalonde
Amrit Mangat, Gila Martow
Kathryn McGarry, Jagmeet Singh
Peter Tabuns
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Valerie Quioc Lim

**Select Committee on Sexual Violence and Harassment /
Comité spécial de la violence et du harcèlement à caractère
sexuel**

Chair / Présidente: Daiene Vernile
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Laurie Scott
Han Dong, Randy Hillier
Marie-France Lalonde, Harinder Malhi
Kathryn McGarry, Eleanor McMahon
Taras Natyshak, Peggy Sattler
Laurie Scott, Daiene Vernile
Committee Clerk / Greffier: William Short

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