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Monday 4 May 2015

Lundi 4 mai 2015

Speaker
Honourable Dave Levac

Clerk
Deborah Deller

Président
L'honorable Dave Levac

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
OF ONTARIO

Monday 4 May 2015

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE
DE L'ONTARIO

Lundi 4 mai 2015

The House met at 1030.

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

Prayers.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: I'd like to introduce Sue Christensen, who is here from my riding of Perth–Wellington.

Mr. Grant Crack: It's a great honour and a privilege for me to have my parents with us today, as well as my sister and brother-in-law and my niece, Allison. I'd like to welcome Wayne Crack, Sylvia Crack, Shelley Todd, Bob Todd and Allison Todd to the Legislature today.

Mr. Paul Miller: I'd just like to welcome my wife to the Legislature again. It just happens to be our 25th anniversary. One of her friends said she's putting her in for the Order of Canada. Anyways, welcome.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I'm sure there are several one-liners that came to people's minds.

Mr. Paul Miller: Speaker, I'm sorry, I forgot to mention her name—it might help—Carole Paikin-Miller.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: We have several members from the Canadian Mental Health Association and the CEO of the Central LHIN here with us today in the gallery for the mental health bus launch taking place right outside Queen's Park after question period. I want to take this opportunity to invite all members for a photo op in front of the mental health bus, acknowledging that this is Mental Health Week.

I want to introduce Camille Quenneville, Rebecca Shields, Dr. Pamela Wilansky, Alexandra Trottier, Arthur Gallant and Kim Baker.

Mr. Rick Nicholls: Today's page captain Luca Riccio-Durocher hails from the great riding of Chatham–Kent–Essex. His family is here today to support him: his parents, Yves Durocher and Dina Riccio, as well his sister, Ella Riccio-Durocher, and his grandparents, Tino and Judy Riccio. Welcome to Queen's Park.

MEMBER'S ANNIVERSARY

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): On May 2, 1985, the 33rd Parliament was elected. I'd like to bring to your attention that Saturday was the anniversary of the 31st year for the member from York Centre, Monte Kwinter. Congratulations.

Not quite a record this time, because the member from St. Catharines has been serving a little longer.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Monte holds his own record.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Monte has a record of his own. Thank you.

WEARING OF RIBBONS

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The Minister of Children and Youth Services, on a point of order.

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: I believe you will find that we have unanimous consent that all members be permitted to wear ribbons in recognition of Children's Mental Health Week.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The Minister of Children and Youth Services is seeking unanimous consent to wear the ribbons, which I'm told are available for all members on both sides. Do we agree? Agreed.

ORAL QUESTIONS

WINTER HIGHWAY MAINTENANCE

Mr. Jim Wilson: My question is for the Premier. Mr. Speaker, when the Liberal Party formed government in 2003, they were handed a model for winter road maintenance. That model kept Ontario roads safe and was cost-effective.

Then Minister of Transportation Jim Bradley—and, subsequently, Minister Wynne—abandoned that model. As the Auditor General noted, the Premier, as transportation minister, chose contractors “on the basis of the lowest-priced bid.”

Premier, you made the decision to put Ontarians' lives at risk to save a few bucks. Will you now take responsibility for the dangerous winter roads created under your watch and apologize to the people of Ontario?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I know the Minister of Transportation is going to want to comment on the details, but let me just say that I—

Mr. John Yakabuski: Don't tell us we've got the safest roads, because they could be safer.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: A lot safer.

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

I didn't quite get the one on this side. Thank you.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I would just say to the member opposite that we're very grateful to the Auditor General for her recommendations. In fact, internal review had already begun, and there were already changes that

were in the works. Following the internal review, the Ministry of Transportation and its maintenance contractors have been working together to improve the quality.

I will say that, as far back as when I was the Minister of Transportation, I was asking questions about the standards. I was asking questions about the adequacy of the contracts, and we were looking at whether there were changes that needed to be made. Those changes are being made, and we accept the Auditor General's recommendations.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Jim Wilson: Again to the Premier: Mr. Speaker, the companies the Premier picked to clear the roads used less equipment, less material, patrolled less often and were unable to meet even the minimum requirements.

When the opposition brought this important issue to the government's attention, the entire Liberal caucus shrugged it off. Minister Murray blamed the traffic accidents on snow-covered highways as an act of God. Minister Bentley said, "It's the weather."

But now we know that ministry staff brought their serious concerns to the Premier's attention, serious concerns which the Premier ignored and put people's lives in danger.

Premier, how many people's lives were you willing to risk to save a few bucks in the winter months?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Transportation.

Hon. Steven Del Duca: As the Premier mentioned in the response to the first question, prior to the public accounts committee asking for the auditor to go in and conduct her review—back in 2013, the Ministry of Transportation undertook an internal review. I mentioned this last week when I responded to questions on this very subject.

As a result of the internal review—and I want to stress that this occurred before the auditor was even asked to go and do her work—combined, we brought 105 new pieces of equipment to both northern and southern Ontario. We appointed a director of maintenance, five area engineers and 20 area inspectors. We expanded our winter safe driving campaign. Also, we reached out to the area maintenance contractors to make sure that they understood exactly what the contractual obligations were.

We thank the auditor for her report. We'll move forward with all eight of her recommendations.

I look forward to having a chance to respond to additional questions.

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

Mr. Jim Wilson: Again to the Premier: When questioned about the Liberal government's road maintenance contracts, minister after minister ignored the problem.

Minister Murray told this House that "we get good value for tax dollars...."

Minister Chiarelli said, "Our contractors are required to meet ministry standards. We monitor their work...."

The Auditor General made it clear that this government made our roads less safe.

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The Liberal government has had five Ministers of Transportation since 2010, and I have yet to hear one of them apologize to the families who lost loved ones on Ontario highways in accidents that could have been prevented if this government had been doing its job.

Premier, why won't you take responsibility and apologize for your government's dismal record and putting Ontarians' lives at risk?

Interjections.

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

Minister?

Hon. Steven Del Duca: I thank the leader for that question. In addition to what I said in the initial question, as a result of some of the other steps we've taken, for the next winter season, 28 more roadside cameras will be in place to monitor road conditions. We'll provide dedicated funding to increase the use of de-icing liquids as appropriate.

Interjections.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: What website do I go to?

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Timmins—James Bay will come to order.

Carry on.

Hon. Steven Del Duca: Subject to approvals, because these are measures that were brought forward in budget 2015, we'll have new equipment in place—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): We're going to do it again. Member from Essex.

Carry on.

Hon. Steven Del Duca: We will also work with our contractors to add dedicated spreaders for sand and salt, both in selected areas of northern Ontario as needed and also in congested urban areas.

I'd also point out that, in fact, it was my immediate predecessor, the member from Toronto Centre, the Minister of the Environment and Climate Change, who actually asked for the internal review in 2013 before the—

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

New question.

WINTER HIGHWAY MAINTENANCE

Mr. Michael Harris: My question is to the Premier. Last week's auditor's report on winter road maintenance points directly at the continued lack of accountability being shown by your government and, more specifically, by you yourself.

For five years, your government knowingly risked the lives of Ontario motorists to save a few bucks. For five years, continued lax standards meant uncleared roads that were the direct result of your government's flawed cost-cutting contracts.

Premier, you were Minister of Transportation for two of those five years. Admit it. You knew about it and you did nothing about it. Can you tell those families forever

impacted by your government's lack of oversight when you, as transportation minister, first knew about the impacts and why you failed to act?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: You know, Mr. Speaker, the premise of the member's question is absolutely not accurate.

Interjections.

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

Premier Wynne: The fact is, Mr. Speaker—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Lanark, come to order; the member from Stormont, come to order; and the member from Oxford, come to order.

Carry on.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Just to put this in perspective, when I first became Minister of Transportation, one of the things I did was, I visited area offices. I asked questions about the contracts and, quite frankly, I asked questions of our staff to make sure that the standards that had been in place before the Conservative government put their new model in place were the same standards as we were using after the contracts were put in place. That was a fundamental question that I asked repeatedly.

There were concerns that were raised, and the reason there was a review that was begun in 2013 was that we had started to ask questions about whether there needed to be changes made to make sure the system that had been put in place by them was actually working.

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

Supplementary?

Mr. Michael Harris: Oh, now, Premier, you changed the standards. You watered them down to the point where you put Ontarians' lives at risk. You did that. You asked the questions, but you failed to actually listen to the people, and I'll tell you why. What's most concerning is that, in fact, your government did know. The auditor's report uncovers the fact that ministry staff were sounding the warning bells, but government failed to listen. You failed to listen.

Page 26 of the report provides a list of some of the concerns from ministry staff. Here are three:

The equipment complement does not appear to be adequate.

There is insufficient equipment to service all lanes.

The route may have insufficient equipment to plow all lanes and shoulders on the 401.

How many of these concerns were raised to then-Transportation Minister Kathleen Wynne, and why did you fail to act?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Mr. Speaker, I know the Minister of Transportation is going to want to speak to some specifics, but the member opposite will recognize that the very reason we were buying more equipment and we were putting more inspectors in place was because we wanted to make sure that our record of having the safest roads in North America—

Interjections.

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

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Timmins-James Bay: second time.

Carry on, please.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: The very reason, Mr. Speaker, that more equipment was bought and that there was an internal review begun was to make sure that we retained our record of having the safest roads in North America, because we knew that we were capable of having that standard in place. That's the standard that we will retain.

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

Mr. Michael Harris: Premier, you're five years way too late.

We're talking about the safety of Ontario motorists. We're talking about preventable fatalities that government failed to guard against.

On November 3, 2010, you boasted in this House, "We obviously work with the regional offices to make sure that the oversight of those contracts is in place." So why weren't you listening when those same regional offices told you they just weren't working?

Again, you stood in the House and told us, "We wouldn't be doing this if safety were at question. We wouldn't be doing it if quality was going to go down." Well, last week the auditor made it very clear: Quality did go down, and the safety of Ontario motorists was in fact put at risk.

Premier, I'll give you one more chance. Come clean today. What did you know, and why did you fail to act?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Transportation.

Hon. Steven Del Duca: I thank the member for that question. In addition to what I said earlier in response to his leader, with respect to the internal review from 2013 which led to the 105 additional pieces of equipment and all those other positive steps that we took—which, by the way, were acknowledged in the auditor's report last week with respect to showing progress—last week I announced that within 60 days, I will report back on additional findings from an internal review that we're conducting.

Secondly, Speaker, in order to make sure that we drive accountability on this, because it is an important issue, I have asked the auditor to come back within one year, at the end of winter 2015-16, and provide an update so as to gauge all of our progress.

PRIVATIZATION OF PUBLIC ASSETS

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is for the Premier. The Premier and her government have hit a new level of arrogance in this province. Debate on the sale of Hydro One has just begun, there has not been a minute of committee hearing and the Premier hasn't asked a single Ontarian what they think about her plan, and yet the Premier has handed out the first tranche of shares already.

Listen up on those back benches, because she has told every one of your constituents that she doesn't care what they think, because the deal is already done.

Will the Premier explain how it is that she has already begun the sale of Hydro One, without any concern of what happens in this House or for what Ontarians have to say?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Again, let me just say to the leader of the third party that she knows full well that there will be consultations on the budget document and that she knows full well that there will be standard committee hearings and there will be a discussion about what is in the budget around the province.

She also knows full well, Mr. Speaker, that there has been a very robust discussion about the need for investment in infrastructure in this province. That's what underpins our decision. It underpinned our decision to review the assets of this province. It underpins our decision to broaden the ownership in Hydro One, so that we can invest in the roads and the bridges and the transit that are needed around this province. We know that if we're going to thrive economically, we need that infrastructure to bring business to Ontario so that businesses can move their goods and so that people can get home and spend time with their families. That's the underpinning of our decision.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: It's no wonder the Premier wants to ram the budget through committee. The Premier has no intention of listening to anything that is actually said there, no interest in anything that any Ontarian thinks about this deal.

New Democrats have been asking Ontarians what they think. More than 20,000 Ontarians have sent the Premier a message that they don't want to pay the price for this bad decision.

In fact, Cory Campbell, vice-president of the Huron-Bruce Liberal riding association, has an online petition of his own, with 30,000 signatures calling to keep Hydro One public.

Will the Premier commit to hearing from all Ontarians, take the committee hearings outside of this city and abandon her plan to ram her Harper-style omnibus budget through the committee?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Mr. Speaker, let's just look at the facts here. People have to have an opportunity to speak to the budget. That's why there has been a proposal to both opposition House leaders that we would increase the standard committee consideration to six days.

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But what I really want to do is I want to talk about what has happened in the past. In 2002, under the PC government, there were zero days of consideration for the budget. In 2000, there were two days. In 1997, there were two days. In 1996, there were two days—all of those under the PCs. Under the NDP, in both 1991 and 1992, there was one day of committee consideration.

We're proposing six days more than the norm, so we want to hear from the people of the province.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Not specific, but I did hear something unparliamentary, and I'd like the member to stand and withdraw; if not, you've got my message.

Carry on.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Speaker, for someone who promised to be open and transparent, inclusive and consultative, this Premier ought to be ashamed of herself. This level of arrogance and contempt for Ontarians is unprecedented in this province.

The Premier has said she will exhaustively study where she can sell a 12 of Bud Light. Should it be the LCBO? Should it be Walmart? How many bottles should be in the case? Where on the shelf should that case be situated? I can see how these are very weighty questions that must keep the Premier up every single night. But will the Premier commit to take the same amount of time, the same due diligence, to study and consult with the people across this province before she sells off their Hydro One?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Just on top of what I said about the need to hear from people in committee hearings on the budget, which we are doing in a much more complete way than the previous parties have done, we also ran on a plan. It was in our platform; it was in our budget. We said that we need to build infrastructure in this province. We took that to the people of the province, and we said, "Do you think you need new roads and bridges and transit?" We asked that question for—how long was our campaign?

Interjection.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: For 42 days. We talked about those issues across the province, and we said, "In order to do that, we have to review the assets of this province. We have to leverage them in order to make sure we have the money." We asked that question to the people of Ontario. They said, "Yes, we need infrastructure." They said, "Yes, go ahead and make those decisions, because without that infrastructure, this province is not going to thrive."

Interjections.

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

Final supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: No; I'm sorry. This is my second question, Speaker.

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

INFRASTRUCTURE PROGRAM FUNDING

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My next question is for the Premier as well. The Liberals have been claiming for months now—in fact, the Premier just did it again a moment ago—that all the money from the privatization of hydro will go to build infrastructure and transit. Yet the first shares are out the door and not one of them—none of that money—is going to go towards the construction of a single kilometre of road or a single subway tunnel.

The Premier didn't need that money from the sale of Hydro One to build transit, and she knows that she doesn't have to sell off any of Hydro One to build infrastructure. So will she stop the charade, stop the spin and stop the wrong-headed sale of Hydro One once and for all?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Mr. Speaker, I would ask the leader of the third party, then, to enlighten us on how we would go ahead with the projects that we've laid out in our budget. How exactly would she suggest that we electrify the GO Transit system and that we increase service to full-time two-way GO? How exactly would she suggest that we fund and execute the Hamilton LRT? How exactly would she suggest that we get started on extending natural gas access for people in our rural communities?

The fact is, the money that we are going to be able to leverage by going over our assets and making the very difficult decisions that we have made, whether it's the selling of GM shares, whether it's the selling of real estate or whether it's the broadening of the ownership of Hydro One—that money is going into those infrastructure builds. I'd like to know what her plan is.

Interjections.

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

I've made it clear that when I stand, it does get quiet. And when we get quiet, we allow the person to put the question. So I'm going to tell the member from Beaches—East York to come to order.

Carry on.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The fact is that there's nothing in the Premier's budget bill to guarantee that the money from the sale of Hydro One goes into transit and infrastructure.

The Premier has said, "Don't worry. Just trust me. You have my word." In fact, I would recommend the backbenchers actually read the budget bill, because it does not guarantee that that money goes into transit and infrastructure.

While she's standing there making that very promise, her ministers are off handing out shares to settle a collective agreement.

Why is the Premier claiming that she's selling Hydro One to build transit and infrastructure when we can see that that's not what's happening?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Actually, Mr. Speaker, what you can see is the projects that are being built around this province right now. You can see that the Union-Pearson line is going to open on June 6. You can see the digging that's happening across Eglinton as the Crosstown gets built. You can see the buses running in Brampton—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Essex, the member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke and the member from Lanark. The member from Lanark, you're warned. The member from Renfrew has two. The member from Essex has two.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: You can see the 407, Mr. Speaker, that's going into its second phase, that's going to go out to 35/115. I can tell you that when I was in Peterborough last week, the people in Peterborough were very, very happy about that road being built.

I would suggest that the leader of the third party has no plan in order to complete those projects.

Interjections.

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

Final supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: When I was in Kingston and the Islands, the people there had no idea that their MPP was running on the sell-off of Hydro One. That's what I can tell you.

This is not about transit, and it isn't about infrastructure.

The actions of this government make it clear that they don't need the 3% the sale of Hydro One would contribute to that 10-year, \$130-billion promise that they've made. She doesn't even have the money yet—

Interjections.

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: She doesn't even have the money yet, Speaker, and the Premier is already spending it on things other than transit and infrastructure.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The Minister of Economic Development is warned.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Selling Hydro One will mean higher bills for families and businesses. It doesn't improve reliability. It's going to cost the province billions in lost revenues.

Families don't like this plan. Even Liberal Party activists oppose this plan.

The Premier is showing by her actions that this isn't about transit and infrastructure. Will she pull the plug before it's too late?

Interjections.

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

Before I move to the Premier, just in case he didn't hear it, the Minister of Economic Development is warned.

Carry on.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Mr. Speaker, let's just be clear. The leader of the third party, when she talks about pulling the plug, is saying, "Pull the plug on building infrastructure around this province." That's what she's saying.

The fact is that she ran on the plan that we ran on. She ran on a plan to review assets in order to have the money to reinvest in the assets that we need for the 21st century.

It would be the easiest thing in the world for a party in opposition to just say, "Don't do that. Just stop. Don't do anything." That's not what government does. The responsibility of government is to move this province forward, to make the tough decisions that are not always popular. I get that.

If we don't build infrastructure now, if we don't work with Hamilton and build that LRT, make sure that we get

that infrastructure in place, then the boom that's happening in Hamilton can't continue. I'm not going to stand by and let that happen. We're going to make those investments.

Interjections.

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

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): We'll put a stop to that quickly, too.

New question.

SOCIAL ASSISTANCE MANAGEMENT SYSTEM

Mr. Bill Walker: My question is to the Minister of Community and Social Services. After six months of flip-flopping on SAMS, your mismanagement continues to negatively impact the lives of 900,000 vulnerable Ontarians. The SAMS implementation, which you and your Premier assured everybody was "pretty seamless" and a "small glitch," and which you likened to rebooting your BlackBerry, also continues to snowball into a costlier mess by the day.

1100

From Windsor, London, Hamilton and Waterloo to Ottawa, municipalities everywhere are racking up millions of dollars in extra costs because you failed to successfully implement SAMS, but we have yet to hear you commit to fully reimbursing municipalities for the day-to-day operating fiascos of your new social assistance program. Minister, will you issue reimbursements to municipalities—yes or no?

Hon. Helena Jaczek: I'm pleased to have the opportunity to discuss the PricewaterhouseCoopers report that we received late last week and its 19 recommendations, which our ministry will be adopting. In fact, I'm meeting with PwC later today.

Certainly in that report they made it quite clear that, in fact, SAMS is functioning in a way that we have been able to produce some four million payments to vulnerable Ontarians over the last five months. It is functioning in a way that is a basis for our reform of social assistance going forward.

Of course, we did have some completely obsolete technology previously: the SDMT system, which was reviewed by the Auditor General many, many times. I think the House might be interested to hear that, in fact, the Conservative government introduced that computer system in 2001, at a cost of \$400 million.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Bill Walker: Back to the minister: Sadly, Minister, recommendations don't put food on the table or pay the exorbitant hydro bills of our most vulnerable. Let me remind you: a pretty seamless rollout, a small glitch, an all-inclusive \$240-million cost. With all due respect, the key facts you told us and the Ontario public to date about the SAMS implementation have been untrue.

So far, you've dumped an additional—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member will withdraw.

Mr. Bill Walker: Withdraw.

So far, you've dumped an additional \$30 million into the system to cover up your failures. Minister, Ontario families can't afford to keep bailing you and your Liberal government out for your mistakes. Will you set the record straight here and now? What is the total cost of this failed effort going to cost the taxpayer, where is the money going to come from and what cuts will have to take place to make up for it?

Hon. Helena Jaczek: I'm sure the member does know that we've reimbursed municipalities to the tune of some \$15 million to date.

In terms of the way forward, which is what this is all about, we have been given a very clear road map by PwC. We will be taking their recommendations very seriously on the governance issue, the structure of the project through the transition as we move towards business as usual.

We're putting together a new communication plan for our front-line workers. I want to thank them again; I know they've had some difficulty in terms of the technology and some of the communication tools and training tools that we use, but we intend, going forward, to make the system far more user-friendly for them, and we're on the path towards that, as PwC has confirmed.

PRIVATIZATION OF PUBLIC ASSETS

Mr. Peter Tabuns: My question is to the Premier. Speaker, this government is planning a fire sale of Hydro One. Six months after this budget is passed, Hydro One will be stripped of oversight from the Auditor General, the Integrity Commissioner and the Ombudsman. Ontarians will also be stripped of their right to request information from Hydro One under the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act.

It's clear that this government wants to leave Ontarians in the dark. Will the Premier admit that she has no interest in being accountable and transparent to Ontarians?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: The member opposite understands that a publicly created company has different mechanisms for oversight. He understands that. We've made it very clear that Hydro One will remain regulated. We've made it very clear that the way prices are set now by the Ontario Energy Board is the way prices will be set after this broadening of the ownership. He also knows that Hydro One will continue to be regulated by the Ontario Business Corporations Act and the Ontario Securities Act, so he knows all that.

But the fact is that this party that is supposed to support the environment, is supposed to support public transportation, is basically saying, "Don't build infrastructure." They're saying, "Don't make the decisions that are necessary to be able to build transit in the greater Toronto and Hamilton area." They're saying, "Stop all that," which I think would be a big mistake for this province.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Peter Tabuns: It's clear to Ontarians that this Liberal government has embarked on a campaign to undermine and discredit the officers of the House. We've heard this story before and we know how it ends. It's bad enough that she's selling our public assets without any mandate to do so.

Speaker, why is this government more interested in covering its tracks than in ensuring accountability and oversight?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Well, Mr. Speaker, again I would say to the third party, why are they not interested in building new tracks? Why are they not interested in investing in the infrastructure that they know full well is needed by their constituents and the businesses that reside in their ridings? Why are they not interested in making the investments that will bring business to this province, will update our infrastructure, will modernize our infrastructure and will invest in the assets that are needed for the 21st century? Why are they not interested in doing that, especially when they ran on the same plan, our same fiscal framework that said we were going to review the assets of this province and make sure that we were investing in the new assets that are needed for the 21st century? That's the question I think we have to pose to them.

PUBLIC SAFETY

Mr. Glenn Thibeault: My question is for the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services.

Many of my constituents in Sudbury have expressed significant concerns about the news that the OPP has decided to move its search and rescue helicopter in Sudbury to Orillia. They're concerned about what this means for safety for our community and that of communities across northern Ontario. Front-line police officers, search and rescue officers, doctors and nurses, city officials, along with average citizens, are all saying the same thing: that the OPP's decision to move this helicopter to Orillia will have significant impacts on the health and safety of northerners.

Mr. Speaker, would the minister provide to this House more information as to how the OPP reached this decision?

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: I want to thank the member from Sudbury for advocating for the safety and security of his community.

Speaker, I'm glad to have the opportunity to stand in the Legislature and discuss this very important issue. The safety and security of every Ontarian is the number one priority of the ministry and the government. It's also the most important consideration for the Ontario Provincial Police.

Given the questions being raised about this locally, I have sought more information about how Sudbury and the north are served by aircraft in search and rescue operations. The OPP are mandated to provide certain police services across the province, including aviation support.

The OPP have the responsibility to communicate their decisions effectively so that all communities in Ontario get the information they need to feel and be safe. Therefore, we encourage the OPP to continue to communicate with the people of Sudbury so that they and all northerners can be assured that public safety and aviation support in the north is maintained.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Glenn Thibeault: Minister, while I realize the OPP make their own operational decisions, I and many constituents still have significant concerns about what this means for public safety. For example, we have an aging population in northern Ontario, and if one of our seniors goes missing, time is of the essence. Adding an additional hour of flight time to get to Sudbury, let alone any other northern community, is very concerning.

Mr. Speaker, we understand that this is an OPP decision, so can the minister outline what this government is going to do in order to protect the safety of the public in Sudbury and right across northern Ontario?

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: Speaker, I thank the member from Sudbury. I have full confidence in the OPP to make the necessary decisions to keep all Ontarians safe. As I previously mentioned, I've requested more information from my Deputy Minister of Community Safety about this decision to better understand how it will continue to best serve the people of northern Ontario. My most important priority is ensuring the safety and security of every Ontarian.

I know the OPP, using their own aircraft, work with other ministries, local police forces and the military to support search and rescue operations across Ontario. For example, the OPP has a 40-year history of working closely with the Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry, which offers planes and helicopters, primarily in the north, including Dryden, Sault Ste. Marie, Timmins, Sudbury, Thunder Bay and Muskoka. This practice has been used effectively in the northwest and throughout northern parts of the province.

Speaker, the OPP, like all police services in Ontario, have a responsibility to make decisions in the best—

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

New question.

1110

PRIVATIZATION OF PUBLIC ASSETS

Mr. John Yakabuski: My question is for the Premier. Premier, despite growing public opposition to your plan to sell Hydro One, you seem unwilling to change your tactics and provide Ontarians with information.

As in the past, Liberals say one thing and do another. In 2002, then-Liberal energy critic Sean Conway said that the provincial government "has no mandate to sell off the grid.... It is unbelievable that it is being sold without any discussion or debate." But now that you have a majority government, you seem perfectly fine to do just that.

Premier, will you open up the backrooms, put any deal for Hydro One in front of the Auditor General and the

Financial Accountability Officer and subject it to a value-for-money audit so Ontarians can see whether or not they're getting a fair deal?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: As the member opposite knows, the whole reason that we undertook a review of our assets was to invest in infrastructure. The fact is that the party opposite doesn't support that, so it's understandable that they are going to work to undermine any investments in infrastructure that we would make.

However, I think the member opposite knows full well that, for example, reinstating the Connecting Links program, which will help rural and small towns across this province to maintain roads that they have not been able to maintain, that they have not been able to upgrade—I think that member knows that investment is important. I think the member knows that the four-laning of Highway 11/17 across the north is a very important thing to do. We're not going to be able to do that unless we have the resources to do it.

I think the member opposite also knows that investing in infrastructure and transit in our urban centres so that our economy can grow is also important, and that's the investment we're going to make.

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

Mr. John Yakabuski: Premier, the reason that so many Ontarians are opposed to your plan to sell off Hydro One is because of answers like that. Ratepayers deserve openness, transparency and accountability, because if you mess up this sale, they will be the ones who pay for it through higher hydro bills.

Over a decade ago, Dalton McGuinty said this: "The Tories don't have a mandate to go ahead with the sale.... These people have never had their say on this, not in an election, not even in public hearings."

Premier, is this not just another case of Liberal "do as I say, not as I do" behaviour, and won't the ratepayers of Ontario be the ones to suffer for your crass political hypocrisy?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I want it on record. Will the member withdraw, please.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Withdraw.

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

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: The answer to the question is no, Mr. Speaker, because one of the starting points that we had for this discussion of assets was, let's look at how the 407 was dealt with. Let's look at how the party opposite made a decision, when they were in government, to sell a public asset completely, to not continue to regulate that asset, to get rid of all of the revenue to make sure there was no future benefit to the people of the province.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Nepean–Carleton, second time.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: We looked at that as a model, and we said that we're going to do the opposite. We're going to make sure we retain ownership, we're

going to make sure that there is a future benefit to the people of the province and we're going to ensure that we have an efficient, well-run company that will continue to return a dividend to the people of the province—all things that the party opposite did not do.

GOVERNMENT ADVERTISING

Ms. Catherine Fife: My question is to the Premier. Using public dollars for partisan advertising is wrong. It's wrong when it's Stephen Harper; it's wrong when it's the Liberal Premier of Ontario. In fact, even the Liberal leader in Ottawa seems to think it's wrong to run partisan ads on the public dime. But the Liberal leader at Queen's Park is gutting the rules so she can run partisan ads on the public dime. Can the Premier explain why she's taking a page from Stephen Harper so she can run partisan ads on public dollars in the province of Ontario?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Well, let me say to the member opposite, just consider that we're the first and the only jurisdiction in Canada that has such legislation, and we will continue to have legislation that will ban partisan advertising. That legislation will stay in place. In fact, we're broadening that; we're proposing that we broaden that legislation to make sure that in the digital realm, the same rules apply.

The fact is that we agree that we should strengthen this legislation. We also agree that it would be an important part of this legislation, this initiative, to look at third-party advertising and see if there are some limits that we need to put on third-party advertising. I suggest that those are things that the third party might want to support.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Catherine Fife: Selling Hydro One is the wrong decision. People don't like it, and it's going to be the people of Ontario who are paying the price for that decision.

The auditor says that by gutting the rules about partisan advertising, "The government could flood the province with self-congratulatory and self-promotional advertising...." It's clear that the people oppose the sell-off of Hydro One. Even Liberal activists oppose the sell-off. The plan is good for consultants and it's good for bankers, but it's bad for families and businesses in this province. Is the Premier gutting the rules about partisan advertising so that she can run ads to try and sell the sell-off of Hydro One?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Typically, the third party is using language that really doesn't apply to what we're doing. We're changing the legislation; we are proposing changes to the legislation. Let's talk about the changes that we're proposing.

We're proposing that we give the Auditor General oversight of digital advertising, as well as transit and movie theatre ads. The Auditor General has called for this; we're proposing that we do that.

The legislation would also be amended to provide a clear definition of partisan advertising, require the government to submit a preliminary version of the ad to the

AG for review and reinforce rules around government advertising during general elections.

Yes, we are proposing changes, but the legislation banning partisan advertising would remain in place and would, in fact, be strengthened and clarified.

MENTAL HEALTH AND ADDICTIONS STRATEGY

Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde: Ma question est pour le ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée.

The minister announced in November 2014 that there was an important expansion of our mental health strategy that will help us improve access to services, reduce wait times and close the gaps in our system.

The residents of my riding of Ottawa–Orléans have been asking me about the new Mental Health and Addictions Leadership Advisory Council and its plan to advise government on how to provide better access, better quality and better value. I informed my constituents that the council is chaired by Susan Pigott, and the members of the council represent diverse sectors that work on mental health and addictions issues. I know that the council will provide expert advice on the strategy's investments, promote collaboration across sectors and report annually on the strategy's progress.

Through you, Mr. Speaker, to the minister, what are the priorities of this council?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: Thank you to the member. We actually have two council members in our gallery today: Camille Quenneville and Arthur Gallant. They'll be joining me after question period on the steps of the Legislature for the launch of the mental health bus. It's a mobile program for youth across this province. I invite all members of this House to join us for a group photo in support of Mental Health Week. The council members will be providing important advice as we move forward with phase 2 of our mental health strategy.

The priorities of that strategy include expanding programs in schools and the workplace; ensuring early identification and intervention for those with mental illness and addictions; expanding housing, employment supports and initiatives to reduce contact with the criminal justice system; improving that transition from child to youth mental health services; and establishing a new funding model that will be linked to population need, quality improvement and service integration.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde: Thank you, Minister, for that response. I will make sure to let my constituents know about the priorities of the mental health council as they work in collaboration with sector partners to accomplish the full goals set forward in phase 2 of the mental health strategy. I know my constituents and Ontarians want access to mental health care outside of a clinical hospital setting. They want services that are in the community and closer to home.

I was at a bowl-a-thon fundraiser yesterday for James Osborne, who committed suicide at 18. The third annual

James Strikes Back bowl-a-thon for youth mental health funds initiatives and services for those youth who are facing challenges. I had the great pleasure at this event to share that our government will be investing \$138 million over the next three years to expand and support needed community health services, but I know that, to deliver on our bold plan, more work needs to be done.

Can the minister tell this House how his mental health leadership advisory council plans to deliver on these initiatives?

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Hon. Eric Hoskins: This \$138 million of new funding is an important investment. It's the role of the mental health advisory council to guide our implementation, ensuring that we're using those dollars most effectively and efficiently.

The council has established five different working groups. They include the promotion, prevention and early intervention working group, to provide expert advice on promoting mental health well-being, prevention of mental illness or addiction and early intervention for Ontarians who are experiencing mental illness. We have a youth addictions working group, as well, providing advice on delivering services and supports to youth with addictions. We have a community mental health and addictions funding reform working group that will provide us with advice as we look to implement a new funding formula, a strategic alignment and capacity working group providing advice on a range of system-level issues, and a supportive housing working group that will provide us with advice as we develop our strategy to create a thousand new supportive housing units as part of the Poverty Reduction Strategy.

PRIVATIZATION OF PUBLIC ASSETS

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: My question is for the Premier. Even the Toronto Star agrees with the Ontario PC caucus that your scheme to give away Hydro One stocks to power workers—including those who work at OPG, an entirely different corporate entity altogether—is, as they say, “puzzling.”

Not only have details been scarce, but the optics are horrible: a fire sale of a public asset; a promise to fund more infrastructure when new money isn't even included in the budget, not to mention your LRT musings today; a rich pension plan that gives employees a 4-to-1 benefit of taxpayer dollars to personal investment; and this government's delusions of what net-zero budgeting really means.

I think it's time that the Premier came clean with Ontario families on what this fire sale of Hydro One for infrastructure really is. Will she admit today it's just a ruse in order for her to pay off public sector pensions?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Mr. Speaker, there are a number of issues that the member opposite has wound into that question.

We're very pleased that there's a tentative net-zero agreement that has been reached between the Power

Workers' Union and employers. That agreement has not been ratified yet, so we're not going to talk about the specifics. We're going to be respectful to the process of ratification.

I'm pleased that the leadership of the power workers expressed support for the Hydro One proposal, because they understand that this can be a strong company. I think they also understand that the need to invest in infrastructure is critical to the health of the province. So we have made that commitment. We are going to continue along that road, Mr. Speaker, because we know those investments are—

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

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Back to the Premier: This is ridiculous. You've spent that money from the Hydro One sale, which hasn't even occurred, at least three times.

If the government believes they can pay off their debt, build infrastructure—including a new Hamilton LRT, as you said in question period today—and provide valuable stock options to the Power Workers' Union, you have not been forthcoming with the details. It makes the rest of us wonder what you're hiding. It's precisely the back-of-the-napkin planning that got this government into trouble with the \$1-billion Oakville and Mississauga power plants. This is getting out of hand.

The Premier assigned the Treasury Board president to scale back spending, maximize assets and bring sanity back to public sector wages and pensions, yet it's this type of sleight of hand that continues to build up our debt and our deficit and erode our infrastructure in the province.

My colleague from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke asked you earlier: Will you put this before the Auditor General, and will you put this sale of assets before the Parliamentary Budget Officer, so that the people of this province will know what you're wasting their—

Interjections.

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

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Finance.

Hon. Charles Sousa: We're doing much more than that in terms of making this accessible, accountable and transparent to the people of Ontario. We brought it forward in the 2014 budget, we brought it forward in the economic statement, we brought it forward in our platform, and we did it again in 2015. We even had a lock-up specifically around this issue, and we're going to continue moving forward.

This deal that the opposition is making reference to is a net-zero deal with the Power Workers' Union, and we're going to be respectful of its ratification process so that we get the details understood by their membership.

Let me quote Don MacKinnon, the president of the Power Workers' Union, who said this: "The Power Workers' Union welcomes and supports the decision by government to keep Hydro One whole in an IPO process that would, in partnership with government, broaden the

ownership structure in Hydro One. This will position the company to grow and provide further high-skill quality jobs for Ontarians."

The idea is to grow the company, increase our dividends and support the workers.

TEACHERS' LABOUR DISPUTES

M^{me} France Gélinas: Ma question est pour la première ministre.

Early this morning, we learned that secondary teachers in Peel have joined their colleagues at the Rainbow board in my riding, as well as educators in Durham, and are now on strike. Speaker, 42,000 students are unable to attend classes in Peel. A total of 67,000 students are out across the province. Meanwhile, the Premier and her government refuse to take responsibility for this Mike Harris 2.0 labour unrest. Considering that negotiations at the central table have also broken down, we know that these are not simply local issues.

Will the Premier finally admit that her austerity agenda is forcing students and families to pay the price?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Education.

Hon. Liz Sandals: In fact, what I would like to report to people is that people were working very hard over the weekend. I know that when they finished up last night, it was well after midnight. So what I would say is that all three parties—the school boards, the unions and the government—are continuing to work.

Yes, people stepped away from the table at some time after midnight last night. But we continue to be determined to go back and to get that negotiated agreement, because we know that the only way we're going to end all of the strikes and get all of our students back to the table is in fact to negotiate and to reach an agreement that all three parties—the unions, the boards and the government—can agree on.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

M^{me} France Gélinas: Back to the Premier: The Premier claims to have cut her teeth in education. However, she's refusing to take responsibility for the fact that secondary students could soon lose their school year. To make matters worse, Ontario's 76,000 public elementary teachers will be in a legal strike position on May 10, and English Catholic teachers recently voted, by more than 94%, in favour of a strike.

Speaker, why are students and families being forced to pay the price for Liberal flip-flopping on class sizes and mismanagement of our education sector?

Hon. Liz Sandals: I think it's important to note that we actually have been working with our colleges and universities; we've been working with our school boards. We know that students are concerned. In fact, I spent some time on the phone this morning with representatives of the Ontario Student Trustees' Association, talking about the situation with them.

What we do know is that in every board in the province, including Durham, Rainbow and Peel, all the interim marks have been submitted to the colleges and

universities, and the college and university admission process is unfolding as it would normally.

We've been working with the boards in all three of the areas where there are strikes to make sure that there are online materials. We've been working very closely with them. One of the beauties of modern—

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

New question.

CANCER PREVENTION

Mr. Arthur Potts: My question is for the Associate Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. Last Thursday, the Canadian Cancer Society held its MPP Education Day at Queen's Park. I was proud that day, as were all members, to wear the daffodil pin to show our support for Canadians living with cancer and to help raise awareness of cancer-related issues.

The International Agency for Research on Cancer has concluded that excessive tanning bed use increases the risk of the deadliest form of skin cancer, malignant melanoma, and that risk is 75% higher if tanning bed use begins before the age of 35.

Now that we are heading into the intense sun season—and in Beaches–East York, we have many beaches to enjoy the sun—I wish to remind the House that just last Friday was the first-year anniversary of our tanning bed legislation coming into force. This is a good time to remind everyone of the risks associated with excessive use of tanning beds.

Speaker, will the minister remind the House of the details of this important piece of legislation?

Hon. Dipika Damerla: I'd like to begin by thanking the member from Beaches–East York for this very important question.

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Speaker, cancer in any form can take a terrible toll on individuals and families, and I dare say that every single one of us in this House has or can relate to a story of cancer.

The Canadian Cancer Society's daffodil pin is a symbol of strength and courage in the fight against cancer. I was proud to wear the pin and meet with volunteers and representatives of the society on Thursday.

The dangers associated with exposure to artificial ultraviolet radiation at a young age have been well documented. The WHO has classified tanning beds in its highest-risk category, along with tobacco. The WHO reports that the risk of skin cancer increases by 75% when tanning beds are used prior to the age of 35.

That is why our government took strong action to protect Ontario teens from the dangers associated with tanning bed use. I'm proud that our government passed legislation to restrict—

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

Supplementary?

Mr. Arthur Potts: Thank you to the minister for the excellent work she's doing to protect the youth of On-

tario. I, too, am very proud that our government has taken strong action on this file.

In her answer to my first question, the minister referenced the World Health Organization's classification of tanning beds as one of the highest cancer risk categories, along with tobacco. I know that the associate minister in charge of wellness is hard at work protecting our youth and promoting healthy lifestyles for our children.

I think we all agree that prevention is the strongest protection for our youth against the dangers of tobacco. Tobacco is the leading cause of preventable disease and premature death in Ontario, and kills upwards of 13,000 people a year.

Our government's Bill 45 seeks to further protect our youth from the dangers of smoking, and I know that the parents in my riding of Beaches–East York are hoping that Bill 45 will quickly pass.

Speaker, through you, will the minister please update the House on the status of Bill 45, the Making Healthier Choices Act?

Hon. Dipika Damerla: Thanks again to the member for Beaches–East York, who does such a wonderful job representing his constituents.

Speaker, we know that flavoured tobacco products have proved to be a gateway to tobacco use and addiction for our youth. We know that one in four high school students who report smoking have smoked menthol cigarettes in the last 30 days. We also know that electronic cigarettes are new products and that we will not know the full health impact of this new technology for some time. That is why we have proposed Bill 45, which, if passed, will ban the sale of all flavoured tobacco, including menthol, and regulate electronic cigarettes.

Bill 45 is now back in the House, and I look forward to its speedy passage, because after that begins the real work of writing regulations. That's where the rubber hits the road. We want to ensure that we listen to our stakeholders and write our regulations in a way that makes sense and is fair to all.

TEACHERS' LABOUR DISPUTES

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: My question today is for the Minister of Education. Durham school board has 24,000 students not in school today, now their 11th day. Rainbow school board has 5,000 students not in school today, and that's their sixth day. And now 42,000 students at the Peel board are not in school today—in fact, we have about seven young people from the Peel school board who are with us today to watch your answer. That's almost 72,000 students not in our schools today.

Your Bill 122, the two-tiered collective bargaining act, is failing students and their families.

Minister, what steps are you taking to assure parents and students that their school year is not in jeopardy? Please answer for these young people who are in the audience here today.

Hon. Liz Sandals: As I said in my previous answer, I'm obviously disappointed that we didn't conclude an agreement yesterday.

I do want people to know that the negotiators at the central table, the school board associations, the government, the unions, were working all weekend till sometime this morning, trying to reach a resolution. In terms of the local talks, I know that both the board and the union in Peel were there all weekend trying to reach agreements.

We all understand, locally at Peel and at Rainbow and Durham, that the thing we need to do, both centrally and locally, is to reach collective agreements, because it is only through reaching agreement that we can get all the strikes to end and get the young people back in class. We want them back in class.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: I don't think these young people were very impressed with that answer, okay, because I'm certainly not.

Minister, you have huge problems with Bill 122 and you have to contend with them. It is very clear that following a dozen years of Liberal mismanagement, your Bill 122's two-tiered collective bargaining is failing students and their families.

Next Monday, there's a strong possibility that 817,000 elementary students will be impacted in a very, very negative way. You've been quoted: "I am not waiting until September. As long as I am in this seat, I will try and expedite it as" quickly "as possible."

Minister, exactly what are you doing to ensure that school proms, class trips and, above all, graduations are not impacted by your current Liberal mismanagement?

Hon. Liz Sandals: As I just said, we know that the college and university application process is ongoing. My ministry officials are in constant touch with all of the boards that have been affected by strikes or that may be affected by strikes. We are in constant contact with the colleges and universities. I am confident that young people will be graduating this spring.

But I do have to point out that the way that they were going to handle this was actually to get rid of 22,700 teachers and education workers. I would suggest to you that firing people and laying them off and cutting them is not the way to get labour peace.

AUTOMOTIVE INDUSTRY

Ms. Jennifer K. French: My question is for the Premier. After years of warning, last week it was announced that GM's Camaro line in Oshawa would be shipped to the US, and with it, 1,000 jobs in the plant and nearly 10 times that in supply-chain industries in our community.

Today we see reports that the province plans to appoint an auto industry adviser, but that's after \$1.1 billion invested and a week too late. I know you shouldn't put the cart before the horse, but this government just let the cart get shipped out of town.

Will the Premier please explain to the 1,000 workers about to lose their jobs and to the 10,000 others whose livelihoods depend on them why she waited until the week after the announcement to make this appointment when she has known it was coming for years?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Economic Development, Employment and Infrastructure.

Hon. Brad Duguid: This decision was made two and a half years ago. We were disappointed then; we remain disappointed today. Our thoughts are always with the workers who are impacted, and that's why we're relentlessly working with GM, Unifor and the federal government to ensure that there is a mandate that's landed in Oshawa after 2016.

I can tell you what the member opposite can do: She's the member for Oshawa. Her leader wants to bring in a party that would jack up corporate tax rates. She says she's going to jack up corporate tax rates to pay off the deficit. That would be a 12% increase. That would kill any opportunity for us to get investment anywhere in this province.

Talk your leader down from her irresponsible position to jack up corporate tax rates. Work with us to ensure we have a competitive environment to land this investment in Oshawa. It's our single, number one priority as a government—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. The time for question period is over.

CORRECTION OF RECORD

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: In one of my answers, I referenced the Hamilton LRT when I was talking about projects. I conflated two lines that are in the budget. I should have said either the Huron-Main LRT or Hamilton rapid transit. I just wanted to correct my record.

VISITOR

Mr. Wayne Gates: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: The page captain's mother, Leona Corr, is here today. I'd just like to welcome her.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): There are no deferred votes. This House stands recessed until 1 p.m. this afternoon.

The House recessed from 1139 to 1300.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

UNITED WAY

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: Speaker, last Thursday I was pleased to attend the United Way Perth-Huron's Spirit of Community celebration. This event celebrated our local volunteers who contribute so much to our communities. Thursday's event was also host to a very special announcement: The United Way Perth-Huron raised over

\$1.15 million during this year's campaign. It's the most they have ever raised in one campaign.

I would like to recognize the campaign co-chairs, police chief John Bates and Wayne Smith. They did outstanding work.

I would also like to offer a special thank you to the residents of Perth and Huron counties. Your outstanding generosity funds the United Way's important community initiatives. We're fortunate to be part of a community that supports local needs and is so willing to give back.

To Ryan Erb and the United Way team, thank you for everything you contribute our communities. Your leadership means a great deal to so many great causes.

STEPS FOR LIFE WALK

Ms. Peggy Sattler: This past weekend 15 communities across Ontario, including my own community of London, participated in the Steps for Life walk. The walk raises money for Threads of Life, a national organization that supports families grieving in the aftermath of workplace fatality, serious injury or occupational disease.

The London walk was opened by Dave and Barb Gerber, who spoke from the heart about the loss of their 25-year-old son, Kyle, who died after a workplace injury in 2008. The Gerbers' story—and the stories of thousands of injured workers that were shared on April 29 at the National Day of Mourning—is a powerful reminder to all MPPs about our obligation to do everything possible to make Ontario workplaces safe. We need to ensure proper training and oversight; we need to hold employers to account when they fail to protect workers; and we need to provide workers who are injured on the job with the support and respect they deserve from WSIB.

Speaker, as NDP critic for post-secondary education, I once again call on the government to address the lack of workplace protection for one particular group of young people; that is, post-secondary students who are doing a voluntary unpaid work placement as part of their program of study. These students currently fall through the cracks of the Employment Standards Act and the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act. If they are injured or killed during their work placement, they are not covered by WSIB. With Ontario's high rates of youth unemployment, unpaid voluntary work placements provide many post-secondary students with their only opportunity to gain work experience. We cannot fail these students.

SENIORS' ISSUES

Mr. Yvan Baker: Earlier today, I had the privilege of hosting a seniors' advisory group meeting in my riding of Etobicoke Centre. Once a month, I host seniors from my riding at the Eatonville library to discuss important issues impacting our community and residents of all ages. Over the course of this past year, we've welcomed knowledgeable guests from the community and beyond, and have covered a range of topics particularly relevant to seniors.

I'd like to thank those guests who come to speak at my seniors' advisory group meetings. In November, we had Bobbi Greenberg from the Mississauga Halton CCAC speaking. In January, we had Lisa Thompson from MTO talking about safe winter driving. In February, we had Denise Harris from the Etobicoke Historical Society talking about Etobicoke's history. In March, we had Michael Burgess from 22 Division talking about frauds and scams. In April, we had Graham Webb from the Advocacy Centre for the Elderly talking about elderly abuse. And today, we had Ted Rouse, a retired financial planner, talking about planning for seniors.

These meetings, Mr. Speaker, provide important information to the seniors who attend them and invaluable feedback to me as their representative here at Queen's Park and in our community. Today's meeting was our last before the summer. I want to thank everyone who has participated in the last few months and convey how deeply appreciative I am of their time and the feedback they've shared with me. Their insights have made an enormous difference in my first year and have made me a better MPP.

Of course, we will all have a chance to catch up again at my annual seniors' tea, which is taking place in June, during Seniors' Month. Ontario's theme this year for Seniors' Month is "Vibrant Seniors, Vibrant Communities." I can't think of a group that theme describes more accurately than the seniors that I meet every day in Etobicoke Centre. I'd like to thank all Etobicoke seniors for all you do to keep our community vibrant.

ENERGY SECTOR

Mr. Robert Bailey: I rise today to inform the House of a very important event taking place in Sarnia-Lambton. On May 5 and 6, the Sarnia-Lambton Research Park Bowman Centre will be hosting the Big Debate, a high-energy discussion of what to do with our nation's wealth of petroleum resources: refine it or sell it?

The program for this two-day event brings together compelling issues of a proposed refinery investment in Sarnia-Lambton, adding value to oil sands bitumen, national and provincial economic impacts, and the evolving manufacturing potentials based upon the energy sector.

The moderator will be Jeffrey Simpson of the Globe and Mail. Participants Dr. Jim Stanford, CAW, and Professor Andrew Leach of the University of Alberta, will debate the following resolution: "Be it resolved that provincial and federal governments in Canada should take proactive measures to encourage greater refining and processing of Canada's petroleum resources within Canada than would occur through private market decisions alone."

Mr. Speaker, Sarnia-Lambton has a long and storied history as the hub of energy procurement in the province of Ontario and the industrious Great Lakes region, and is a perfect setting for a detailed discussion of the importance of the oil industry to Ontario and Canada's future. I look forward to attending this very important event and

hope that this government will soon commit its support to the SABER petrochemical project in Sarnia–Lambton.

MOOSE TAGS

Mr. John Vanthof: Often members' statements are used to talk about culture, and I'd like to talk about part of the culture of northern Ontario. One of the things that's very important to our culture is the moose hunt. People come together over generations, and it's one of the most pivotal parts of our culture.

Sadly, it's a part of our culture that might die, and not because of a lack of interest but because of the management of our moose harvest. As you know, it's done by a lottery for moose tags, and in some of our units, tags have dropped by 90%. No one is more concerned about the number of moose and the long-term health of the moose population than hunters. Hunters want to work with the MNR to ensure that the moose population is stable and growing.

But in the budget, I again see that there has been a cut of \$50 million to the Natural Resources Management Program. So they're going to focus on their core. Do you realize, Speaker, that in my area, there are 50 townships, and there are only two conservation officers? It's impossible for two conservation officers to manage 50 townships. Also, they're supposed to do aerial surveys every three years to be scientifically credible. The most hunting pressure in the province is in unit 29—they did it five years.

Again, I urge the government to actually work with northerners to ensure the future of the moose hunt.

2ND BATTALION, IRISH REGIMENT OF CANADA

Mr. Glenn Thibeault: I rise today to recognize the 100th anniversary of the 2nd Battalion, Irish Regiment of Canada, and to congratulate them on receiving the freedom of the city from the city of Greater Sudbury.

The freedom of the city is an ancient privilege. It's granted by a city for a specific military unit to march through the city with bayonets fixed, colours flying and drums beating. The Irish Regiment of Canada, based out of my riding of Sudbury, was granted freedom of the city on October 15, 2005. They will be holding their parade in Sudbury on Saturday May 9, in Tom Davies Square, with a reception and a dinner to follow.

The regiment formed on October 15, 1915, and its members have served in a number of campaigns including World War II, the former Yugoslavia and peace-keeping missions in the Middle East and Afghanistan. I think it's very important that I also acknowledge Warrant Officer Gaétan Roberge, who made the ultimate sacrifice and was killed in the line of duty in October 2008.

Since they moved to Sudbury in 1965, the 2nd Battalion, Irish Regiment of Canada has been an integral part of the community. They've been helpful in the food bank; they pick up all of the food for our food bank cam-

aign during Christmas. They participate in festivals. They're involved in many other aspects of our community that are so important.

There are 80 to 100 reservists based out of Sudbury, and many veterans of the Irish Regiment call Sudbury home. We'd like to congratulate them again on their 100th anniversary.

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BOB HUSKINSON

Mr. Steve Clark: It's with great sadness that I rise today to pay tribute to a long-time friend of mine, Bob Huskinson. Bob passed away last night, and I join everyone in mourning this outstanding gentleman, one of the city of Brockville's great citizens.

Bob was a former mayor and a former member of council. He was actually a giant on council. He was larger than life. His passion was unrivalled. His dedication to the citizens of Brockville spanned an incredible 26 years, the longest public service record that anyone had in the history of the great city of Brockville.

It was an honour for me to serve with Bob Huskinson for three terms—nine years. He was one of the first people, actually, whom I went to see as a 21-year-old who wanted to seek the office of mayor of Brockville.

I can remember going to his kitchen with his son, who was a long-time friend of mine. I was wearing my high school football jacket. He asked me if I owned a sports jacket or a suit. I said that I actually owned both. He told me that I should hang the football jacket up and make sure that I wore my suit or my sports jacket and was presentable when I knocked on doors. He gave me some incredible advice during that first campaign that I had as a young person.

Knowing Bob would be in his seat at a council meeting, ready to serve and ready to tackle the issues—he was one of the most well-prepared politicians that I ever met. Everyone I've ever served with on city council for those years, and even those after, said that he was always so prepared. He also did his homework.

He taught me the understanding of looking at both sides and trying to seek a compromise, but always making sure that I felt in my heart it was the right thing to do. Because if he didn't think it was the right thing to do, there was no way you were ever going to sway Bob Huskinson from the view he had.

I was proud to call him a friend. I was proud to spend many summers at his cottage on Charleston Lake as a young person with his family; proud to know his family and his extended family. I just want to take this opportunity to extend to his wife Janice and his sons Craig, Rick and Rob and their families and their extended families my deepest sympathies. Bob was a great man and we're going to miss him.

CANADIAN MUSIC WEEK

Mr. Mike Colle: This week is the beginning of music week. More than 4,500 musicians and 160,000 music fans are coming to Toronto to participate in Canada's largest new music festival, with more than 900 performances taking place in 60 venues throughout Toronto.

The start of music week is called Music Monday. It's the world's largest single event dedicated to raising awareness for music education. Each year, hundreds of thousands of students and educators and music-makers participate in the simultaneous nationwide concert performance of an original song written by a Canadian artist.

This year's title song, *We Are One*, was written by 16-year-old Connor Ross, a student at Mayfield Secondary School in Dufferin-Caledon. Connor's song was the successful choice from 200 songs that were submitted across Canada.

Music Monday is a great example of how music programs shape young lives and the fun that young people can have in making music. I congratulate all the young Ontarians who have been taking part in this year's Music Monday and for being part of music week right across the province, including in Brantford and Eastview.

STAR WARS DAY

Ms. Daiene Vernile: Today is a very important occasion. It's an unofficial holiday known as Star Wars Day. May 4 is celebrated by thousands of Star Wars fans around the globe. Although it is a nod to the classic sci-fi movies from the 1970s, there's actually a political connection to the first time that that reference was ever made.

It was on May 4, 1979, the day after Margaret Thatcher become Britain's first female Prime Minister, that her party decided to celebrate the victory by taking out a half-page advertisement in the *London Evening News* which said, "May the Fourth Be with You, Maggie. Congratulations."

Today, the Internet allows Star Wars fans around the globe to connect with each other, as May 4 has become a great grassroots tradition. In 2011, the very first organized celebration of Star Wars Day took place right here in Toronto at the Toronto Underground Cinema. This Friday, in my community of Kitchener-Waterloo at the Centre in the Square, John Morris Russell will conduct the K-W symphony orchestra in a program titled *The Final Frontier: From Star Wars to Star Trek and Beyond*. I'm told that the concert is going to be out of this world.

So whether you spend the day anticipating the newest Star Wars movie that's going to be out later this year or channelling positive forces to combat evil in the world, however you choose to celebrate, may the force be with you.

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

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE
ON JUSTICE POLICY

COMITÉ PERMANENT DE LA JUSTICE

M. Shafiq Qaadri: Monsieur le Président, je demande la permission de déposer un rapport du Comité permanent de la justice et je propose son adoption.

I beg leave to present a report from the Standing Committee on Justice Policy and move its adoption.

The Clerk-at-the-Table (Ms. Tonia Grannum): Your committee begs to report the following bill, as amended:

Bill 49, An Act with respect to immigration to Ontario and a related amendment to the Regulated Health Professions Act, 1991 / Projet de loi 49, Loi portant sur l'immigration en Ontario et apportant une modification connexe à la Loi de 1991 sur les professions de la santé réglementées.

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

Report adopted.

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

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

SPECIAL INTEREST GROUPS
ELECTION ADVERTISING
TRANSPARENCY ACT, 2015LOI DE 2015 SUR LA TRANSPARENCE
DE LA PUBLICITÉ ÉLECTORALE
DES GROUPES D'INTÉRÊT PARTICULIER

Mr. Walker moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 96, An Act to amend the Election Finances Act with respect to third party election advertising / Projet de loi 96, Loi modifiant la Loi sur le financement des élections à l'égard de la publicité électorale de tiers.

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

First reading agreed to.

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

Mr. Bill Walker: The bill amends the Election Finances Act to expand the definition of third-party election advertising to include issue advertising, which is defined as advertising with the purpose of taking a position on any issue within the legislative competence of the Legislative Assembly of Ontario. The bill imposes the following limits on third-party election advertising expenses: \$150,000 in relation to a general election and \$3,000 in relation to a given electoral district in a general election or by-election. The penalty for the offence is a fine equal to five times the full amount of the expenses

incurred, not just the amount in excess of the applicable limit, and if a third party is convicted of an offence of exceeding the limits applicable to an election period, the registration of the third party with the Chief Electoral Officer ceases to be valid and the third party is prohibited from applying for registration until after the polling day for the general election next, following the end of that election period.

At present, section 38 of the act limits the campaign expenses that a registered political party, a registered candidate, a constituency association endorsing the candidate, or a person or body acting on their behalf is allowed to incur during a campaign period and section 42 requires each political party to file a financial statement of those expenses with the Chief Electoral Officer. The bill expands those expenses to cover expenses that a person or body acting with the express or implied knowledge and consent of the party, candidate or constituency association incurs during a campaign period in relation to producing an election advertisement in support of the party or acquiring the means of transmitting such an election advertisement to the public.

PETITIONS

ALZHEIMER'S DISEASE

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

I fully support it, and will give it to page Misha to bring to the Clerks’ table.

SPECIAL-NEEDS CHILDREN

Mr. Taras Natyshak: I’m pleased to introduce a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario that reads:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

I fully support this petition, will affix my name and send it to the Clerks’ table through page Jae Min.

USE OF DIGITAL TECHNOLOGIES

Mr. Shafiq Qaadri: I have a petition addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

“Whereas virtually all Legislatures in Canada have fully embraced digital technologies;

“Whereas digital communications are now essential for members of Parliament to conduct their business, correspond with constituents, respond to stakeholders, stay in touch with staff, store data and information securely, keep ahead of the news cycle, and to remain current;

“Whereas the Legislative Assembly has concluded its mobile device pilot project, which is now being consid-

ered by the Board of Internal Economy, chaired by the Speaker;

“Whereas progressive record-keeping relies on cloud technology, remote access, real-time updates, multiple-point data entry and broadband, wireless and satellite technologies;

“Whereas the Legislative Assembly of Ontario has been considering the value, utility and usage of digital devices within the legislative precinct and within the chamber of Parliament itself for years;

“Whereas the Legislative Assembly has for years maintained a BlackBerry-only policy in a valiant effort to buy Canadian, but this approach is handicapping, retarding and penalizing MPPs, their staff and indeed all members of the legislative community;

“We, the undersigned, respectfully request all various decision-makers of the assembly and government to fully embrace digital technologies, be platform-independent, empower members, acquire the optimal Android and Apple devices of varying sizes, maximize the many technology offerings, and orchestrate a much-needed modernization of the conduct of parliamentary business for the eventual benefit of the people of Ontario.”

I certainly support this and send it to you via page Ashton.

WINTER ROAD MAINTENANCE

Mr. Norm Miller: I have a petition in support of improved winter roads maintenance. It reads:

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the area maintenance contract system has failed Ontario drivers the past two winters;

“Whereas unsafe conditions led to the maintenance contractor being fined in the winter of 2013-14, as well as leading to a special investigation by the provincial Auditor General;

“Whereas the managed outsourcing system for winter roads maintenance, where the private contractor is responsible for maintenance, but MTO patrols the region and directs the contractor on the deployment of vehicles, sand and salt, has a proven track record for removing snow and ensuring that Ontario’s highways are safe for travellers;

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

“That the Ontario Ministry of Transportation take immediate action to improve the maintenance of winter roads based on the positive benefits of the previous delivery model, where MTO plays more of a role in directing the private contractor.”

I support this and give it to Madison.

ONTARIO NORTHLAND TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION

Mr. John Vanthof: Speaker, I have a petition sent to me by Dianne Lacarte from Englehart.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

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

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

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

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

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

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

I wholeheartedly agree. I affix my signature and give it to page Colton.

WATER FLUORIDATION

Mr. Bob Delaney: I have a petition addressed to the Ontario Legislative Assembly. It’s entitled “Fluoridate All Ontario Drinking Water,” and it reads as follows:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

I’m pleased to sign and support this petition and to send it down with page Thomas.

TAXATION

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

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

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

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

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

“Whereas the aforementioned points lead to the conclusion that the government is seeking justification to raise taxes to pay for their excessive spending, without accomplishing any concrete targets;

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

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

I fully support it and will send it with the great page from Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound, Cailyn Perry.

ALZHEIMER’S DISEASE

Ms. Peggy Sattler: This is a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

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

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

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

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

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

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

“Whereas there is an urgent need to plan and raise awareness and understanding about Alzheimer’s disease

and other dementias for the sake of improving the quality of life of the people it touches;

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

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

I affix my name to this petition, fully support it and will give it to page Madison to take to the table.

USE OF DIGITAL TECHNOLOGIES

Mr. Shafiq Qaadri: I have a petition addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

“Whereas virtually all Legislatures in Canada have fully embraced digital technologies;

“Whereas digital communications are now essential for members of Parliament to conduct their business, correspond with constituents, respond to stakeholders, stay in touch with staff, store data and information securely, keep ahead of the news cycle, and to remain current;

“Whereas the Legislative Assembly has concluded its mobile device pilot project, which is now being considered by the Board of Internal Economy, chaired by the Speaker;

“Whereas progressive record-keeping relies on cloud technology, remote access, real-time updates, multiple-point data entry and broadband, wireless and satellite technologies;

“Whereas the Legislative Assembly of Ontario has been considering the value, utility and usage of digital devices within the legislative precinct and within the chamber of Parliament itself for years;

“Whereas the Legislative Assembly has for years maintained a BlackBerry-only policy in a valiant effort to buy Canadian, but this approach is handicapping, retarding and penalizing MPPs, their staff and indeed all members of the legislative community;

“We, the undersigned, respectfully request all various decision-makers of the assembly and government to fully embrace digital technologies, be platform-independent, empower members, acquire the optimal Android and Apple devices of varying sizes, maximize the many technology offerings, and orchestrate a much-needed modernization of the conduct of parliamentary business for the eventual benefit of the people of Ontario.

“In agreement whereof, we affix our signatures”—mine included, and send it to you, once again via page Ashton.

OFF-ROAD VEHICLES

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

“Whereas it has been over a decade since regulation 316/03 of the Highway Traffic Act has been updated to recognize new classes of off-road vehicles and a motion to do so passed on November 7, 2013, with unanimous support of the provincial Legislature;

“Whereas owners of two-up ATVs and side-by-side UTVs deserve clarity in knowing which roadways and trails are legal for use of these off-road vehicles; and

“Whereas owners should be able to legally use their vehicles to access woodlots, trails and hunting and fishing destinations;

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

“That private member’s Bill 58, which seeks to update the Highway Traffic Act to include new classes of all-terrain and utility task vehicles, receive swift passage through the Legislature.”

I fully support this, Mr. Speaker, will affix my name and send it with page Thomas.

USE OF DIGITAL TECHNOLOGIES

Mr. Shafiq Qadri: I have a petition addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

“Whereas virtually all Legislatures in Canada have fully embraced digital technologies;

“Whereas digital communications are now essential for members of Parliament to conduct their business, correspond with constituents, respond to stakeholders, stay in touch with staff, store data and information securely, keep ahead of the news cycle, and to remain current;

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I, too, agree, sign it and send it to you by page Jae Min.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

BUILDING ONTARIO UP ACT (BUDGET MEASURES), 2015

LOI DE 2015 POUR FAVORISER L'ESSOR DE L'ONTARIO (MESURES BUDGÉTAIRES)

Resuming the debate adjourned on April 30, 2015, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 91, An Act to implement Budget measures and to enact and amend various Acts / Projet de loi 91, Loi visant à mettre en oeuvre les mesures budgétaires et à édicter et à modifier diverses lois.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): When we last debated this particular bill at second reading, I understand that the member for Nipissing had the floor. I recognize the member for Nipissing.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Thank you very much, Speaker. I encourage you to settle in and get yourself a glass of water. It’s going to be a wonderful hour when you get to hear all the pearls. I’ll keep you awake. I promise I’ll keep you awake.

I am going to speak very frankly about the budget document and some of the contents in it, and I’ll get my shameless plug in very early: I am going to be speaking—in fact, I’m going to read to the Liberals—chapters of Focus on Finance 2: A Look Into Ontario’s Finances. If you want to read along, you can go to my legislative website, fedeli.com, and download a copy of the 106-page book. It is a shameless plug, but it’s “must” reading for young and old. The web address is fedeli.com, in case you missed it.

Minister, did you enjoy it? Is it top financial advice to you?

Last week’s budget, when presented—we could have seen the right thing done by the Liberals. They could have changed the path that Ontario is on. Over the last several weeks, our caucus certainly has stood here, sharing stories about the pain that’s being inflicted by the Liberal government on families throughout Ontario. We also heard from the rating agencies, the Ontario Chamber of Commerce and the Canadian Federation of Independent Business, but we especially heard from the Auditor General. They all warned us about the same thing: Our economy, and this government, is headed in the wrong direction. Actually, it started back with Don Drummond, who said, when he rang the bell very clearly, that you’re going the wrong way; you need to drastically change the direction we’re headed. The Auditor General told us that if you don’t change the direction, you’re going to start seeing the very services we enjoy in Ontario being, in her words, crowded out. That means there’s no room left for them because we’re busy paying interest.

What does this government do instead, Speaker? More of the same: more spending, even more debt and yet another deficit. We are certainly one of the very few sub-nationals left in the world, especially one with an annual

deficit of this size. This is a massive deficit. Speaker, this government continues to use the province's credit card instead of using their debit card.

The budget, if you look carefully at it as we did, merely announces more of the same. In many instances it's a direct re-announcement—a cut-and-paste, if you will—from what we saw last year. A great example of that is the \$130-billion announcement on infrastructure. If you look in the 2014 budget, it was already there, word for word. In fact, in the discussion of the \$130-billion infrastructure budget, they took exactly the same words, plunked them in there and pretended it was some kind of new announcement. They're out there trumpeting this great news, which is old news.

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The only thing that really makes you wonder what the game is that's afoot is: In last year's budget, if you look carefully, Speaker—I'll even tell you the page. Page 45 of the 2015 budget talks about last year's budget, the 2014 budget. Asset optimization: That's the nice way of saying, "We're going to have a fire sale of our assets." If you look very carefully, last year they needed to sell, over four years, a total of \$3.1 billion in assets to make it work. That's \$1.1 billion this year, \$1 billion the next, only half a billion the further year, and half a billion the year after that. So their dedicated funds were \$3.1 billion. But now, all of a sudden, in addition to the sale of GM shares, the sale of the LCBO headquarters and the sale of the OPG building, they need a \$9-billion sale of hydro to make it work. In last year's budget, they only needed \$3.1 billion, but now, in addition to that, they need the \$9-billion fire sale of Hydro One.

They're selling public assets to pay for what was already budgeted. This is a shell game, Speaker. They're really using the money from the sale of Hydro One to pay off their mortgage. That's exactly what they're doing. It's a shell game. It's a little bit of a switcheroo.

In the budget last year—this \$130 billion that was announced—they needed \$3.1 billion. Now that we have this new money coming in, they'll take the money, put it into transit, but then take the money that already was in transit and haul that away. That's exactly what's about to happen here because they don't know how to balance their deficit; they don't know how to balance a budget. This money will be the money that will be used to get them down to the \$8.5 billion. I almost want to choke over that amount. It's still \$8.5 billion. They'll crow over how great that is—\$8.5 billion; they still plan on spending more than they plan on taking in.

Without that hydro revenue, Speaker—they're going to take 100% of our hydro, hive off 60%, sell it for \$9 billion, and then change the law that says you must use the revenue from the sale of hydro assets, and put it against the \$27-billion mortgage that is held on hydro. Instead of doing that, they're going to change the law. It's in the bill already to change the law—that does not force them to follow the law and put the money where it's destined. They're going to use it to bail out their own deficit.

So, Speaker, they're going to take the \$9 billion, put \$5 billion against the mortgage, and \$4 billion they're going to use ostensibly for transit—but in reality, take the transit money that was already there and back it out and put it towards the fact that they don't know how to balance a budget if their life depended on it.

What's going to happen now is, you've got \$9 billion out of the system and you've got only 40% of that asset left to generate the revenue to pay off the mortgage, so they won't have the revenue—right now, 100% of that revenue is available to pay off the mortgage. They're not going to have that any longer. So how are we going to pay the hydro mortgage? Well, we know darn well they're going to put their hands deeper and deeper into our ratepayers' pockets and try to dig out even more cash to pay off the bill because they took that money and put it elsewhere. That's exactly what's going to happen.

On Friday of last week, at 11 o'clock on Friday morning, May 1, the peak hydro rate went up exactly 15%. It went from 14 cents to 16.1 cents. I know they're not good at math; I understand that. We've seen that in the budget. It went up 15%, a number they continue to deny. But it's a fact: 14 cents to 16.1 cents; a 15% increase in hydro rates.

On November 1, hydro rates will go up again, according to them, only another 10%. On January 1, when they take the consumer benefit away, hydro rates will go up yet again, another 10%. So 15%, 10%, 10%—all within eight months. That's the reality of the hydro realm that these people have created. I don't know why they continue to use our hydro to cover up the mistakes that they've made.

Our team was very busy stripping away the numbers and getting to the real numbers. While we were doing that, they were busy stripping away all the transparency that is currently in the hydro sector.

Speaker, let me tell you a story about what is happening with Hydro One. The moment a single share is sold, Hydro One will no longer be deemed a public asset. That's in their bill. That's what's happening. What does that mean to the people of Ontario? Well, first of all, it strips the Auditor General of powers: no more value-for-money audits from the Auditor General. "Let's not have that pesky Auditor General involved in Hydro One any longer." They've seen to that. It's in the bill. They removed the right of the Auditor General to look into Hydro One's books. That's gone, day one. They cut out the Financial Accountability Officer after six months. They can no longer begin new audits. It's over: no more financial accountability of Hydro One. That's in their bill. The Financial Administration Act is amended to limit our ability to obtain any information on Hydro One—gone. We're stripped of that as well.

What's happening here is a wholesale stripping of any access to any information whatsoever about an asset that the people of Ontario own. There's nothing open and transparent about that.

Now, it's very clear that the government doesn't want us to know what they're up to. We had to scrounge our files through the gas plant hearing documents, only to

find that many were deleted. Speaker, they've gone ahead with this Hydro One sale and taken care of that. There's no sense scrounging for anything anymore; none of the agencies have any authority over Hydro One any longer. Freedom of information is no longer available for Hydro One. We don't get to know a thing—nothing, no freedom of information.

Schedule 38 removes Hydro from the sunshine list. We don't even get to see any of the details about their employees. This is one way to stop the flow of information: cut access; cut it all. This is their idea of being open and transparent: no more Auditor General, no more freedom of information, no more sunshine list disclosures—nothing, Speaker. We get nothing.

Let's take it a little further. Lobbyists don't have to register any longer for Hydro One. My gosh, Speaker, what are they hiding from us? What are they attempting to hide?

Schedule 23 excludes Hydro from oversight of the Management Board of Cabinet. They don't even want to know what's going on—just let it be.

Hydro One is also taken out of the Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act. One of the biggest complaints we have in our MPP offices, and I'm quite certain over on the government side as well—they just don't want to tell you about it—are all the complaints we get in our offices on Hydro One, the help that isn't coming. Thankfully, it fell under the oversight of the Ombudsman, who had a scathing report and a revelation which helped families. Finally, families found some relief when this terrible activity at Hydro One was disclosed. Well, they have an answer for that, Speaker. The Ombudsman is no longer available to investigate Hydro One once the first share—one share—is sold. They saw to that in the bill. That is written into their bill.

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Speaker, if you could imagine the next one: the Integrity Commissioner gone from oversight over Hydro One. No integrity, Speaker; no integrity commission. But, as I said earlier, considering there's no integrity left in the system, you won't need any of those officers.

At what point does shame kick in? It's shameful that they have taken this most important public asset and hidden from us all of these oversight agencies, every single one of them. They didn't miss a trick. No Auditor General, no Financial Accountability Officer, no Ombudsman, no Integrity Commissioner—no integrity, Speaker. No more freedom of information. It's the last time that we are able to find out they spent almost \$7 million—

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): The member for Northumberland–Quinte West will withdraw that comment.

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: Withdraw, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): The member for Nipissing has the floor.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: No more freedom of information. This is the last time that we are able to find out that \$7 million was spent on consultants for the sale of Hydro

One, including \$24,000 for the speech writer to smooth it over in the public. No more sunshine list. This is the last time we see Sandra Pupatello's six-figure salary.

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I would ask the member for Davenport to come to order. Yes, you. Thank you.

The member for Nipissing has the floor.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Thank you, Speaker. This is the last time we'll see Sandra Pupatello's six-figure salary or know that Carmine Marcello made \$728,000 at Hydro. All this now will be done behind closed doors, just the way the Liberal government likes it. I have to ask them, what are you guys trying to hide this time?

The reviews on the budget are not pretty, not pretty at all. Moody's offered two words: "considerable risk." Others are claiming a "deteriorating fiscal position." Another said, "The budget document is lacking in detail." Of course, we've been saying that for years, because the mid-term numbers and the long-term numbers never were in existence. So for a leading financial institution to suggest that the budget is lacking in detail is certainly not an overstatement whatsoever.

The worst thing I found, though, is on the budget's page 199. This is my favourite one. I've talked about this many times in the Legislature over the last few years. If you remember, Speaker—and I'm just going to refer to Focus on Finance, because it has the actual wording of what we saw in that chart.

Interjections.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Speaker, they can make all the jokes they want. I'm going to read you what was no joke. It was the Ministry of Finance's document that we uncovered during the gas plant scandal that went to their cabinet, to their finance minister and to Kathleen Wynne. It talked about this chart that they dared use yet again, on page 199 of the budget, the one that has the fake \$24.7-billion deficit number.

Here's what they have to say:

"The Ministry of Finance admits the benchmark of progress," an estimated \$24.7 billion, is complete fiction—this is their own quote now, Speaker—"was never a real expectation' and"—I'm quoting from the Ministry of Finance, the secret document we obtained in the gas plant scandal hearing—"was a deliberate policy' to project 'a worst-case outcome.'" It was deliberately misleading. They also admit that "the path to balance"—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I have to ask the member to withdraw that unparliamentary remark.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Withdraw. I'll try to parse out the unparliamentary language that was used in the confidential advice to the Premier: "The path to balance was then drawn from there, assuming a straight-line trajectory of declining deficits." So what they did is they had this number at the bottom, that they themselves call not a real expectation and a deliberate policy, and they need to get to zero. So they drew a straight line, and then filled all these in. That's exactly what they did, and they admit it here. They say, "It was assumed that spending would be

constrained to whatever it takes to hit these targets.” Somebody laid a ruler across, drew a straight line, and then filled it in and said, “Those are our budget deficit numbers. Now figure out how to make it happen.”

But they 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. For the extended outlook, neither sector targets nor plans yet exist.” Then they conclude with, “In order to hit the deficit targets, spending growth going forward has to decrease dramatically.” Well, we all know what happened after that—nothing. It did not flatline. It didn’t decrease dramatically. We saw it go up. In fact, spending is up \$2.4 billion again this year.

So they used that same chart, the one that we disclosed here in the Legislature. They used that chart again—the nerve. It’s quite funny; I guess they ran out of charts. They used the same chart again that we outed as a chart that they said was a complete fabrication. That’s what they decided to do. Again, they couldn’t even make a new fake chart, they had to use the existing chart that they had, which leads us to ask the question: Why do they continue to make life so expensive for Ontario families?

The warning bells were ringing all around the minister, all around the Premier, all around the government that you need to do a drastic turnaround, a dramatic change. All of these outside financial organizations have said the same thing. They should have realized when Fitch downgraded Ontario’s long-term debt to AA- that maybe something is wrong, maybe the way we’re going about things here on the other side—maybe you should start to listen. They had to downgrade Ontario. Standard and Poor’s has a negative outlook on the province’s long-term debt—not a very admirable position to be in. Moody’s lowered their outlook from stable to negative. Again, after reading your budget, the two words that they came out with were “considerable risk.” Not their proudest moment.

The fastest-growing expense item is interest on debt. It’s going to increase 7% over the next three years. They’re taking money that should be going into front-line health care, and they’re using that money now to pay the interest on their debt. They’re taking money out of health care and education, and using those funds to pay off interest on their overspending. It’s their financial mismanagement alone that’s doing that. It’s not the tsunami, as the former finance minister used to say, of the recession. The recession ended for everybody else but us, apparently. They continue to make it harder for Ontarians to pay their bills.

Let’s look at some of the specific quotes from Moody’s. They acknowledge the fact that they’ve shown no progress whatsoever in decreasing debt. Moody’s told us that they continue to “see risks” in the province’s budget. They said that our “deficits have shown little progress in the past few years, and in fact”—now this was interesting, Speaker—“have increased from 8.1% of revenues ... to 9.2%” of revenue. It’s an interesting statistic from Moody’s that tells you where we really are headed.

Worst of all, they say that “provincial economic forecasts have tended to overestimate growth.”

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They fluffed the last budget numbers, and only after four months. They presented the budget in July. Four months later, they had to come out and restate that their revenue was off by \$500 million. In four months, their budget was wrong by half a billion dollars. Now we know why they’re selling assets, why they’re increasing taxes and why they’re raising hydro bills. It’s all about asking seniors and families to pay for their 12 years of financial mismanagement.

Last week I asked a question of the Premier when she said, “We don’t believe right now that taking more money out of people’s pockets would be responsible.” Speaker, I was in the budget lock-up for seven hours, so I don’t know if the Premier has actually read her own budget if she thinks it isn’t filled with schemes to take money out of people’s pockets.

There’s the new payroll tax, which was passed at 11:45 last Wednesday morning, going for royal assent tomorrow. The payroll tax is going to put a tax on businesses. I’ll talk about that a little bit more.

A cap-and-trade tax: That’s a tax on everything. If I thought the payroll tax was the mother of all taxes, well, cap and trade, that’s going to be the mother of all taxes.

They now have, of course, the beer tax. They have another instalment on the aviation fuel tax. Increased user fees, increased hydro rates—all of those are taking money out of people’s pockets. I don’t know which of those the Premier thinks is not taking money out of people’s pockets.

Over the last few weeks, our caucus had five budget asks that were designed to make life better for those living in Ontario. We said to them, “Stop the madness. Do what all the other financial institutions, the rating agencies and everybody involved in caring about Ontario are saying: Stop putting a burden on people.”

The first thing we said was “Stop your payroll tax.” Instead of stopping this payroll tax—which is going to be a huge increase in payroll taxes; we already have the highest payroll taxes in Canada, so this is going to put us into a new stratosphere—they rammed it through. Only days later, last Wednesday at 11:45 in the morning, our party stood here to put a halt to it. The Liberal government has passed that and, sadly, on January 1, 2017, taxes will go up for businesses. Businesses will lose employees. By the government’s own admission, it could be anywhere between 18,000 and 54,000 people who lose their jobs.

We also suggested to them in one of our five asks that they cancel this foolish cap-and-trade tax as it hurts families by putting a tax on everything. We know what this is. This is the one that’s going to take all this money—three cents a litre for gas; all the other expenses that will go up; a tax on everything—and use that money to help pay their bills and lower their deficit. There’s absolutely not one nickel of this money that will go into anything to

help climate change—nothing. There's not a thing that these guys are doing that that will help.

We asked them to fix home care by reducing the number of agencies that patients must deal with. Did they listen? No. In fact, they went exactly the opposite way. They are spending now \$750 million on yet a new level of bureaucracy between the patient and their health care. Instead of the CCAC and the LHINs, we've now got these new health links. Sixty-nine of them are being formed to keep you away from your valuable medical services. Speaker, that's \$750 million for more bureaucracy.

The fourth was to ask them to make hydro more affordable. It has chased away business. It has caused families to choose between food or fuel, to decide whether to heat or eat. That's what we have in Ontario today. Speaker, you and I did not grow up in an Ontario that made families choose between food or fuel.

I've told this Legislature on a few occasions: All three parties went to many cities in the pre-budget consultations. We all went to Ottawa and we heard from Jennifer, an ODSP recipient who sat in front of us. It was heart-wrenching. She talked about the fact that she had to shut off her power from 6 o'clock every morning until noon and again from 3 every afternoon until 7 so she could afford to pay her hydro bill. Speaker, have you ever heard of anything like that in the province of Ontario, the once proud province of Ontario? We have become a have-not province with our hand out now, and we still can't give a leg up to Jennifer to help her with her hydro bill. She has to put extra sweaters on and shut her power off to be able to have enough money to buy food. What an awful scenario that is for the province of Ontario, which once had the lowest cost of energy in North America. With all of their failed plans, we are now the highest-cost jurisdiction, chasing companies out of Ontario one by one.

Think about it, Speaker. When you have companies like Heinz or Caterpillar or Kellogg's or General Mills or Wrigley's—Caterpillar is still making earth-moving equipment, just not in Ontario. Heinz still makes ketchup, just not in Ontario. They've gone to lower-cost jurisdictions. Ours is the highest-cost jurisdiction in the country—the highest energy rates in North America, the highest payroll taxes, strangling red tape that is costing businesses. This is the Ontario that this government has created.

The last ask was to present a serious, credible and detailed plan to balance the budget by 2017-18. All we got, again, was a series of fluffed-up numbers and old charts that we presented before as being fake charts. I don't understand what it will take for this government to change their ways, to stop making it so hard for Ontarians to pay their bills.

Like most MPPs, we go home on the weekends. I head up to my hometown of North Bay. Not this weekend but the weekend before I ran into a guy—I've known him for years—who has owned a manufacturing shop in North Bay for decades; a great, young business guy, a hard

worker. I asked him, "How's business? What's happening?" He's in the construction field. He said that if things don't pick up he's going to close and leave the province for other work. It's not just in our community; it's the province.

When you think about the WSIB tax that this government brought in and what it has done to the small contractors throughout Ontario, it's part of what it has done to hurt the contractors throughout Ontario.

I was at a community dinner, and a municipal councillor joined my wife and I at our table. I asked him, "How are things? What's happening in the region?"

He said, "It's like the air is coming out of our economy." That's the reality of what's out there. That is the reality of what's happening.

Interjections.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: They can laugh all they want, Speaker. We don't laugh at the 500,000 men and women who woke up this morning without a job, the 300,000 of them who used to work in manufacturing; that sector is gutted.

When we were on the campaign trail, I drove from Niagara Falls to Fort Erie. I have to tell you, it was heart-wrenching to see building after building, these former manufacturing businesses from when we were the powerhouse in manufacturing, boarded up, one after another after another, all the way to Fort Erie. We all went together. All three parties went together. We drove down to Fort Erie for pre-budget consultations. On the drive back, I was ashamed. I was embarrassed. I was ashamed of what our province has become. I think of those families that put their life savings into those businesses.

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Not only was it Fort Erie; we also went to Fort Frances, and I took a side trip. I landed in Thunder Bay and drove throughout the north as part of the campaign. If I was embarrassed and ashamed for the people in southwestern Ontario, from Niagara Falls to Fort Erie, with all those boarded buildings, I've got to tell you, Speaker, it ripped my heart out to be home in the north. Eight out of every 10 lumber mills, logging firms, pulp and paper, anything to do with the forest—eight out of 10 are gone, because of high electricity rates, high payroll taxes, all of the things that this government is doing to cripple Ontario. Speaker, 63 of those firms are gone. Many of them will never open again. They've torn the facilities down.

Of course, when I went up to northeastern Ontario, more my neck of the woods, I drove to Iroquois Falls, where the plant is shut down now. In its heyday, it used to have more than a thousand employees—far more than a thousand employees. The remnants were there when I visited a year ago. They were struggling, hanging on. They're gone today. They're gone, Speaker.

I drove a little bit west of that, and I visited the former site of the largest power user in all of Ontario. This is the classic example of what the Auditor General told us. Under the Green Energy Act, that failed Green Energy Act that crippled our businesses and hollowed out our

manufacturing sector, the Auditor General told us that for every one job created, two to four would be lost elsewhere. I found where he's talking about. When I was in Timmins, there was this big brownfield. It used to be Xstrata Copper. It used to be the single largest user of power in all of Ontario. Bigger than any car plant, bigger than anything, was Xstrata Copper in Timmins. It's gone today.

Don't forget, the Auditor General, in December, told us that we have paid Quebec and the United States—paid Quebec and the United States—\$2.6 billion to take our surplus power. When these guys brought in the Green Energy Act, the previous Auditor General told us in the Legislature, in November 2011—they didn't know what they were doing. They brought in the Green Energy Act without doing a business plan. There was no idea what this would do in Ontario. They had no idea, as Environment Canada has told us—if you look on OSPE, the Ontario Society of Professional Engineers, they have a paper out on the damage that wind power has done to Ontario. On pages 8, 11 and 12, they will tell you that wind power predominantly makes power at night. Well, they didn't know that, when they put the Green Energy Act in. So we take this power and we pay Quebec and the States to take it. The Auditor General told us: \$2.6 billion, we've spent.

So Quebec has all this cheap power now, that they were paid to take. That's not even cheap; it's negative cheap. They knocked on Xstrata Copper's door—70 kilometres from the Quebec border, if you know your geography—and they lured them across. "Why don't you cross the border? Come on over for cheap power." And they did. They crossed the border. They went 115 kilometres and reopened there, and terminated 672 men and women in Timmins, all because Ontario has the highest energy prices in North America and Quebec has amongst the cheapest. It was a no-brainer for them. They popped over, and off they go. They're at work there now. The 672 men and women no longer have jobs here. That's what has happened in Ontario.

We asked, in one of our asks, to lower power rates. What do we get instead? A 15% increase last Friday, 10% coming on November 1, and 10% on January 1. This is what is happening. People are suffering all around. We've presented five solutions, and this government didn't take any of them into account. In the budget, they could have done the right thing. They could have changed the path that we're on.

All of the financial institutions warned of what's happening. They pleaded with them—they begged them—to do the right thing. The Conference Board said they couldn't balance the budget without spending cuts. What do they do? They increased spending by \$2.4 billion.

In the report from the Ontario Chamber of Commerce—I think the title of the report, should pretty much give you an idea, Speaker. It's called *How Bad Is It?*—referring to our economy. They say, "Ontario's fiscal situation is becoming increasingly dire...." That's not very nice. They say it's "likely to reach a state of crisis

unless the province cuts spending and changes the ways it does business."

You don't know about this report? Don't your guys feed you the information? This is just a few months ago. I know they give you talking points, but you should start reading a little bit on your own. Google "*How Bad Is It?*" They'll tell you how bad it is, Speaker. They told us only a few months ago how bad it is: It's dire, a crisis. These are not good words to read in a report from the chamber of commerce.

After reading their budget, experts now talk of a "deteriorating financial position." Their financial mismanagement all boils down to the pain they are about to inflict on seniors and families. That's what is coming: more pain. Again, they continue to make it difficult for Ontario families to pay their bills.

Speaker, look at the budget deficit this year: \$10.9 billion—again, going the wrong way. It was working its way down, albeit terribly slowly. It hits \$9.2 billion as a budget deficit one day. They're crowing about that. Only a Liberal would brag about having a deficit over \$9 billion. From there we see it go to \$10.5 billion under their tutelage. Then it goes to \$10.9 billion. Speaker, it's going the wrong way. They do not understand what every financial institution in Ontario is telling them: Change the way you're running the province; you're running it into the ground. "Dire," "critical," "dramatic": These are all words that financial institutions use.

Again, they talk about the \$130 billion in infrastructure. We know that it was an old announcement: cut and paste, cut and paste.

Speaker, the ORPP, the Ontario registered pension plan, the new pension tax they're bringing in: If you look at their own once-secret document that we got in the gas plant scandal hearings—luckily we were able to go through the 300,000 documents and find one particular document that was confidential advice to the Premier—it told her that with the new payroll tax, for every \$2 billion you take out of the economy, you lose 18,000 jobs. So if this is a \$6-billion program—the one that was passed by the Liberals last Wednesday—that's 54,000 job losses that the Ministry of Finance predicts we will lose. I've used this example several times in the Legislature.

I was in London several months ago. I ran into a guy I know who has a business with 15 employees. He said, "Vic, let me tell you: When this pension tax comes through, I'm going to fire one of my employees. I'm going to take their salary, and I'm going to use it to pay my 1.9% of their tax. I know that my employees can't live on an almost 2% wage reduction, so I know they're going to have to ask for a raise. I'm going to have to top them up as well, so I'm going to have to pay their share as well. Now I'm paying a 3.8% increase. I'm going to fire one guy, use that money to pay the 3.8% tax that's coming off of me and my employees and tell them that they're going to have to work harder."

That's the reality: There is no more money in the pockets of businesses, Speaker. It's just not going to happen.

But this doesn't just hurt businesses. It hurts charities, as well. It hurts vital organizations. Think of something like the YMCA, as a good example. All of a sudden, now they've got to dig deep into their pockets and into their employees' pockets to come up with the money for this pension tax. So it's not only going to hurt business, hurt families, hurt seniors; it's now going to hurt our charities, it's going to hurt our volunteer organizations. This is going to just hollow them out like they've hollowed out the manufacturing sector in the Green Energy Act.

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Speaker, when you look at some of the numbers here, you can see that our revenue continues to increase—\$118 billion this year, \$124.4 billion budgeted next, \$129.4 billion, \$134.4 billion. We don't have a revenue problem in Ontario. There's nothing wrong with our revenue. We have a spending problem here. We have a spending problem in Ontario. We tax and we spend. We tax more, and we spend even more. We're spending far more money than we take in.

When you look at their spending, in fact, in every single ministry spending was up this year except for three:

- the Attorney General—congratulations. It was marginally similar to last year;
- the finance ministry—congratulations. It was down a hair; and
- tourism, down a few dollars.

All the rest were up by millions—multi-, multi-, multi-millions; as it turned out, billions: \$2.4 billion.

Let's look at what they're doing to health care. Health care was traditionally, worldwide, five and a half—

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I would ask the Minister of Natural Resources to please come to order.

The member for Nipissing has the floor.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Thank you, Speaker. Traditionally, we see health care increasing five and a half to six points everywhere. Look what they're doing: health care, 1.9%—

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I'm not sure if the Minister of Natural Resources heard, but I asked him to come to order.

The member for Nipissing has the floor.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: So 1.9 % in health care this year, which is why—see, they just can't make the choices. That's what it's all about. It's about—

Hon. Bill Mauro: Two per cent is a cut.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I'm going to warn the Minister of Natural Resources.

The member for Nipissing has the floor.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Thank you, Speaker. The fact that their spending on health care is 1.9% this year and 1.1% next year—this is exactly what the Auditor General warned us about, this “crowding out.” They cannot set their priorities. That's what this is all about. It's all about making choices. They choose to overspend, to have a

deficit and to use money on interest instead of on health care.

That's why in my city of North Bay, 94 full-time health care professionals were fired, including 54 RPNs, and 34 part-time health care workers were fired, including 11 RPNs; 43 employees at Ontario Northland were fired, and 54 at Nipissing University were fired, including 22 professors. This is exactly what the Auditor General warned: We will be crowded out of the services that we have come to enjoy in the province of Ontario.

That's what they've done: They've made choices. They made a choice to overspend on things like bailing out the MaRS building across the street, the \$400 million—bail it out and do it in secret, by the way—in 2010. Thankfully, a whistle-blower came forward in 2014 and showed us the paperwork or we never would have known.

You wonder, where is all our money going? Well, two previous Auditors General told us: \$1.1 billion for gas plants, \$400 million—we have an Ornge scandal. We're mired in scandals that are sucking up our money and taking it away from health care and education. That's exactly what's happening. It's all about choices, and these guys cannot choose the right path. They can't choose the decent path for families and for seniors. They refuse to do that. They chose to spend \$2.4 billion more this year and have continued deficits, which have skyrocketed, where we have a debt.

Speaker, when they took office, the debt in Ontario was \$139 billion; today, it's \$284 billion. The interest on that—they have doubled Ontario's debt in only 12 years. This is unprecedented. It took 137 years—137 years—

Interjections.

Mr. Steve Clark: The truth hurts over there.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Order. The member for Nipissing.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Thank you, Speaker.

I do know the truth hurts; I know it does.

It took 137 years to create a debt of \$139 billion. These guys doubled it in 12 years. That's what they did. They have doubled our debt.

How are they going to continue to pay for their misdeeds? Here's how they're going to continue—

Hon. Steven Del Duca: I know it hurts.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I'm going to ask the Minister of Transportation to come to order.

The member for Nipissing.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Here's how they're going to pay for this year's misdeeds, Speaker: They are going to, for instance, peel away the Ontario Interactive Digital Media Tax Credit. It's gone. The Ontario Production Services Tax Credit—this is going to be retroactive. These are cuts that they're making.

When you look at the things like the Ontario Production Services Tax Credit, what does that mean? Well, that's Hollywood North. That's movies and television programs that are filmed here in Toronto and a lot of them, six of them recently, in North Bay, Sudbury, all over. I can tell you that those days are about to be all over. Why? Because this Ontario Production Services Tax

Credit is going to be put in and it's retroactive. So if you have a production in Calgary or in Edmonton right now, as there are many, and do your post-production—

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I'm asking the member for Beaches—East York to please come to order.

The member from Nipissing.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Thank you. If you have these TV series that are filmed—some are filmed in Calgary and Edmonton in Alberta. They're some westerns that we're all familiar with. The post-production comes to Ontario. Not for long. All of those jobs will either head to the States or stay where they already are in Alberta. That's what's happening with this. Most of the time, in my office, since the budget has been spent—with the television and film industry coming in and saying, "Where did this come from? Do you know what this is going to cost our production firm in dollars and what this is going to cost the production in Ontario?"

We're talking about thousands of jobs leaving Ontario and yet another misguided tax grab by this government. That's what they're doing. They cannot control their own spending, so they are going to stop the tax credits. Now they're going to get 100% of nothing instead of a smaller percentage of a big pie—100% of nothing, coming up. That's the math problem with these guys over here. They just do not know what's happening.

The Ontario Interactive Digital Media Tax Credit—another one. All the video games that are produced here—they're about to kill that sector. They do not understand. These are vital jobs here in Toronto and all over Ontario. Ottawa has a huge sector that these people are involved in.

They're killing the Apprenticeship Tax Credit. Good God. Where have you been for the last year or two? You don't realize the youth unemployment that we have. Here's a chance for young men and women to get their first job and have a tax credit, an Apprenticeship Tax Credit. What the heck is happening? You're going to take the tax credit away and make this sector—all sectors now—suffer because they can no longer have these apprentices.

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I cannot even begin to imagine what you have to tell these people to get them to understand the pain that they are causing young men and women, families and seniors. They leave no stone unturned here, Speaker. The hydro bills that are making families suffer, sending businesses all over the province—taking away a tax credit. They don't understand what a tax credit is. It gives you a small piece of a pie that you didn't have before. Now there will be no pie. I'm really worried about the jobs that will be lost not only here in Toronto but in northern Ontario: Sudbury, the Soo, Thunder Bay, North Bay. We all had film productions there.

Speaker, you know what they're telling us. Why? In the budget document, their key economic assumptions are that the Canadian dollar to the US will be 70.5 cents.

That's what they're forecasting, not the 90.5 cents of last year. They're saying that it's only going to be 70.5 cents. That spread in the dollar: "Well, that will be enough. That will be enough to keep you here." Oh, my heavens. You're banking on the fact that the American dollar will overpower us to such an extent that it's going to solve our economic woes. That's your idea? That's your big plan for balancing the deficit: pray that the American dollar out-strengthens us to a point that it's 70.5 cents? That's it? That's the big plan, Speaker: "We've got the American dollar coming on strong. That will solve all our problems." Damn the torpedoes; full steam ahead. Why would you need to give any breaks to companies to move from Alberta to Ontario, from Quebec to Ontario or from Hollywood to Ontario to shoot movies here? "Heck, the dollar is going to do it for us. We don't need to promote anything that's helpful to people. We don't need to do that. The dollar is going to do it all." That's their big idea.

They boast about the unemployment rate. In the last 100 months, in 99 of those 100 consecutive months, we've had higher unemployment than the national average. Congratulations, Liberals. That's your best number: 99 out of 100. That's what you get your perfect score on. That's the number that you can get a good score on, not hydro rates, not payroll taxes—well, those are the highest, so I guess you could score those well as well. It's embarrassing. When does shame kick in with these people with what they're doing to our families right across all of Ontario?

You know, Speaker, they talk about taxes in this budget: "Don't look over here. It's only a \$100-million beer tax. It's only a payroll tax. It's only a carbon tax. It's only the aviation fuel tax kicking in another penny this year. Don't worry; it's only \$100 million. Don't let little things like that worry you."

Let me tell you a story, Speaker. Because I'm from northern Ontario, let me tell you a quick story about a diamond tax.

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I'm going to ask the member for Barrie to come to order.

The member for Nipissing has the floor.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: You know, Speaker, I'm a northern Ontario boy. I have a prospector's licence. I've had one for more than 30 years. Here in the north, we have prospectors who found diamonds. They found diamonds 150 kilometres due west of Attawapiskat. De Beers now has the Victor mine there. This is a classic Liberal move. Here they are, developing the mine, committed, spending billions of dollars to get it going, and what do these guys do? The first thing they did to them was put in a diamond tax. But they said, "Don't worry. We're going to tax all diamond mines in Ontario, even though you're the only one." This is the modus operandi of this government. They've never found a tax they don't like, and I'm sorry, I've never found a tax that created even one job in Ontario.

When you look at the Ring of Fire, where I've been four times now, and see the lack of production up there, knowing fully well that many of the companies are very hesitant, knowing these guys are chomping at the bit to raise taxes. Chromite is discovered in the Ring of Fire. Each and every company will tell you, because they've told me, "We're worried this government will bring in a chromite tax." Norm Miller asked this government, one day, if that's what they plan on doing. They would not deny it.

This is this government. This is their legacy. Their legacy is tax and spend—the highest payroll taxes in the country, the highest energy rates in North America. Friday, at 11 o'clock, their hydro rates went up 15%. That's the legacy that this Liberal government has. That is why our party, under no circumstances, could ever stand up and support a budget that continues to hurt the people—the men and women, the families and the seniors—of Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I listened with interest to the remarks of the member for Nipissing. He's always a very entertaining speaker and really kept us engaged for a full hour, so that's to his credit.

There is one point that he made that I have a fundamental disagreement with, and that is about where the problem is in this budget. He challenges the government and says that the fiscal problems are on the expenditure side, not the revenue side. We disagree. The fiscal problems with this government are on the revenue side. What we see in this budget is nothing to address the lack of quality, affordable child care for children; nothing to address the fact that post-secondary education in this province is more expensive than any other province in Canada—we see university students now paying more than half of university operating costs—nothing to address the shortfalls, the cutbacks in elementary and secondary education. We see program expenditures well below inflation, not being able to take into account population growth across our communities.

The only solution that we see from the government to deal with the revenue problem is to sell off Hydro One. This has huge repercussions for all Ontarians. It is a huge concern for people in my community. I am receiving overwhelming numbers of emails from constituents who are really concerned about the implications of the privatization of Hydro One and what this is going to do to their hydro bills. We know that electricity in this province is already skyrocketing and is leaving many people feeling more and more challenged and more and more unable to pay the bills.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: It's a pleasure to add my thoughts on the speech from the member from Nipissing. A couple of things: First of all, talk about loss of jobs. I think we all remember June 12. On June 13, if they were to form

government, 100,000 jobs gone—100,000 jobs. So they're the ones to talk. They're the ones to talk.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I'm going to give you more time. The Speaker of the Legislature has asked us to raise the bar in terms of decorum. I'm trying to respect the wishes of the Speaker and do my job as one of the assistant Speakers, as the First Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House. I have to say that the behaviour this afternoon has not been to the standard that the Speaker would expect of us. I would ask the members to consider that for the remainder of the afternoon. We still have three hours and 20 minutes to go.

The member for Northumberland—Quinte West has the floor.

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: Thank you, Speaker, and thank you for your guidance. I was at the same meeting that we had today with the Speaker, and I respect your thoughts.

The other piece that I want to talk about is—they're talking about Hydro One, they're talking about the sale of the LCBO land. The 407: the 407, gone for 100 years. Gone; no control whatsoever, Speaker, and they have the nerve to talk about us—gone, Speaker.

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Speaker, let me talk about some of the points from the party of negativity. Here's Christian Provenzano, mayor of Sault Ste. Marie: "Our roads need work; our aqueducts need work. We're all aware that our water infrastructure needs some work. The budget was good news in that sense."

Charla Robinson, president of the Thunder Bay Chamber of Commerce: "From a Thunder Bay perspective, of course, whenever there is transit investment, there is an opportunity for Bombardier to increase their timelines and their productions, which is a good thing for creating jobs here."

The Hamilton Chamber of Commerce—you tell me when you want me to stop, Speaker: "The Hamilton Chamber of Commerce applauds the Ontario government for formalizing its commitment to a fully funded rapid transit project in Hamilton in the 2015 budget...."

Speaker, that's just a few of the positive things. I see you're going to stand up, so I will stop.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Steve Clark: It's a pleasure to provide a couple of comments on the member for Nipissing. He's a fine member. I very much appreciate his diligent work.

With your assistance, Speaker, I want to quote from some of the Fedeli on finance—Focus on Finance 2. I always call it "Fedeli on Finance" because I admire the member so much. I have to tell you, Speaker, he does a tremendous amount of work on this file. He's a wonderful member. I'm proud to call him a friend. I think it really shows the depth that he has studied, because at the very end he has put a number of very good observations. For those who go to fedeli.com, go down to page 98 online. It's his final thoughts, and I'm just going to read, with your indulgence, Speaker:

“Skyrocketing energy rates, new taxes and crushing red tape. From there you were provided considerable evidence that the finances in Ontario are far worse than the government has disclosed, and even among themselves, the Liberals acknowledge they have no plan to balance the budget.”

He goes on in this passage on page 99, and I’m paraphrasing now: that he will continue to ask those important questions in the budget. I think I’m going to read another passage: “Companies continue to leave Ontario. And the Liberals continue to introduce new taxes.”

Certainly when I spoke at my chamber of commerce, that was loud and clear. Members of that group in my city and also citizens who don’t deal with business have expressed concern about the payroll tax that this government is bringing in, the carbon tax, the new beer tax—they’ll charge us the beer tax, yet we get no benefit from that government decision.

Thank goodness for Vic Fedeli and his Focus on Finance 2.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Taras Natyshak: I’m pleased to join the debate here today. I listened intently to the member from Nipissing as he valiantly dissected and disseminated the information from the budget, as he always does. I was pleased to hear some tidbits of information that I hadn’t known. One was that, under the new provisions of oversight and accountability through Hydro, we will no longer know how much those executives on various boards of directors will be paid. That’s a whole other area of information that we won’t have and the public won’t have.

However, I listened to him for an hour. He did a great job. I didn’t hear much what he would do or his party would do that would be different.

Mr. Grant Crack: There you go.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Well, don’t applaud yourselves, because you have the same plan that the Conservatives have. This is a continuation of the Mike Harris, the Ernie Eves, the Tory agenda of austerity and cuts to public service, cuts to vital aspects of our province, cuts to tax credits for apprenticeship for employers who are hiring new young workers, cuts to education—I’ve got five schools in my riding that are on the chopping block. Your party obviously doesn’t put a priority on education. We’ve got funding infrastructure—

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I’m going to ask the member for Glengarry–Prescott–Russell to withdraw his unparliamentary comment that I heard a second ago.

Mr. Grant Crack: Withdraw.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): The member for Essex has the floor.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Thank you, Speaker. We have infrastructure projects in my riding of Essex that have been on the books for six years, eight years, that have not been fully funded, but now they’re requiring to sell off a major asset in Hydro One to finally realize the funding. It

points directly to their inability to manage the province’s finances with any measure of accountability. Ontarians are going to suffer from this budget; there’s no doubt.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Thank you very much for the questions and comments. We now return to the member for Nipissing for his reply.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Thank you very much, Speaker. I want to thank the members from London West, Northumberland–Quinte West, Leeds–Grenville and Essex for their commentary as well.

At noon today, I went down to the Hilton hotel and met with Finance Minister Joe Oliver. I didn’t have lunch there, mind you; I missed the lunch. But I did listen to his speech.

He talked about why it’s important to balance. I said to him, “I’m going to read your points,” because it was so important, why you need to balance. I know this government here likes to spend, when budget deficits went from \$9.2 billion up to \$10.5 billion up to \$10.9 billion.

Of course, the federal government has a balanced budget, and here’s why: He said, “It clears the way for more tax relief.” Speaker, it’s refreshing to hear that when there’s money, there’s tax relief coming from the federal government. That’s great news.

He said, “It provides confidence to the business community.” I have stood in this Legislature and said that at least 25 times. Business wants to go in a solid jurisdiction.

He said, and I think this may have been his most important point, “A balanced budget meets the moral requirement of not saddling our children with debt.” What an admirable thought of why he has balanced.

Interjections.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: These guys wouldn’t know how to balance.

He talked about the targeted investments to create jobs and growth and make life better. As the feds have implemented tax credits, these guys have implemented tax credit removal. That’s the difference between a balanced budget and a not-balanced budget.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate? I recognize the member for Nickel Belt.

M^{me} France Gélinas: Thank you, Speaker. I believe we have unanimous consent for us to stand down our lead. She will come to do her lead a little bit later on this afternoon, and you get me.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): It is my understanding that unanimous consent on that has been sought and was granted by the House, so yes, you have the floor and you have 20 minutes for your presentation.

M^{me} France Gélinas: Thank you so much, Speaker. I’m happy to focus my 20 minutes on the budget on some of the priorities that are within my portfolio. I will focus my talk on how the budget addresses the pressures in our health care system here in Ontario.

Just to put it into context, the health budget is the biggest budget of any ministry within our province and it stands right now at close to \$50.77 billion. It’s a huge budget. The budget itself has seen an increase of 1.2%

compared to last year. This is one of the smallest increases in the health budget that we have seen. Just last year was really tough with an increase of 2.6%. This year is going to be even tougher with a 1.2% increase.

To put that into context, the CPI, the consumer price index, will increase by 1.2%. That means that any pressure that comes from population growth—and we know that Ontario grows by about the size of PEI every year; maybe 125,000 more join the ranks of Ontarians every year. That is not covered.

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We also know that we have an aging population, which adds a little bit of pressure on our health care system. We usually cost that at about 1%. Sure, the price index will be covered with the 1.2%, but the pressure for population growth and for an aging population—none of that is taken into account.

If we start with one of the biggest pieces of the pie within the health care system—look at hospitals. Our hospitals have lived with three years of base budget freezes. That is, for the last three years, the base budgets of our hospitals have stayed the same, and this budget announced that we are in for at least one more, and probably two more years. You're looking at five years of frozen base budgets for hospitals. What does that mean? It means that although the money coming into our hospitals stays the same, the pressure going out continues to go up.

If you look at things such as drugs: Hospitals do have to have medications to care for the people who go there. The average cost of drugs for hospital drugs goes up between 8% to 10% each and every year. They have to make do with cutting someplace else.

I'm sure you've all seen your electric bill. The electric bills have been skyrocketing. The electricity in the hospital is just as expensive, if not more, than it is in your home. Here again, pressure is going up on the expense side but the revenues are staying the same.

The cost of wages: Most of the expenses in the hospital—they don't fabricate widgets; they provide care. Care is provided by people. People need to be compensated for the work that they do. This also puts the pressure up.

You can see where the expense side of the ledger continues to go up but the revenue side stays flat. What does that mean? That means that the difference between what they take in and the inflation of what they put out has to be balanced.

How is this balanced? It's balanced for the first two years of the flat base budget for hospitals. I must say that our hospitals stepped up to the plate. They really looked at, "How can we do things better?" They reinvented many ways of providing care. Some of them struggled from the beginning, but a lot of them were able to bring upon savings in the way that they operated through economies of scale, through streamlining of services, that allowed them to balance those pressures. Although there was no new money coming in and the cost of doing business was going up, they were able to balance that, except for a few.

Come year 3, which is the year we just ended, 152 of them—every single one of them—had a hard time balancing their budgets. They had such a hard time that they had to start to look at programs and services, as well as personnel. We saw more and more programs that used to be provided within our hospitals—our hospitals that have layers of accountability, oversight, transparency, ombudsmen, patient services—all of this that is part of assuring quality care to patients had been transferred into the community. There is nothing wrong with moving services into the community if the community is able to provide the high-quality care that you put in place, those layers of oversight to ensure quality, but none of that was done. We transferred programs and services into the community, most of the time, in a for-profit environment.

Those private, for-profit clinics—almost all of them have user fees. What does that mean? That means barriers to access. When you think about medicare, medicare is basically hospital services and physician services for free. They are available to Ontarians based on need, not on ability to pay. But the minute you move it into the community, you are not covered by medicare anymore. You are now into the private realms, and a lot of extra cost creeps in.

All of a sudden, for your colonoscopy, you will need to talk to a dietitian, and that will cost you \$45. And for your cataract surgery: "Well, that scan is not covered, but you really need it. That will be 200 bucks." "Those lenses are not covered, and they'll be 300 bucks each." What would have been a free-to-you, based-on-care—not on ability to pay—service in the hospital is now delivered in the community, but you have to pay. If you have the money, I figure it's not that bad. But for a lot of people, it is a barrier to access.

All of a sudden, our health care system, which we are so proud of, is being dismantled brick by brick, private clinic by private clinic. This budget does nothing to change that trend. This budget brings flatlined revenue to our hospitals while their cost pressures continue to go up.

The efficiencies that could be found have been found. We are at the point where we are cutting programs, we are cutting services and we are cutting staff. We are now at over 250 nursing positions alone that have been lost to the system.

I raise my hat to a lot of hospital corporations that understand how important it is to have good nurses. They have gone out of their way to make sure that they issue as few pink slips as possible and that they keep their staff. I'm really happy to see the amount of respect that most hospitals have shown the nurses and the other people who work within the hospital walls, so that nobody would be kicked to the curb—although some of them were.

But what's really happening is, the minute that somebody retires, moves to a new job, goes on maternity leave or is sick and the positions become open—they do not backfill. What ends up happening is they open positions that are casual and on call. There are lots of jobs for nurses, all right. There are lots of jobs that work week-ends, statutory holidays, Friday nights and Saturday

nights, and the rest of the time you sit by the phone and you wait for that phone call—not good care, not good jobs. This has been going on throughout our hospitals. We can foresee that for the next two years, the same thing will be going on.

But I've gone way too long just on hospitals.

The next thing in the budget that is being cut is drugs. We know that the budget has identified \$200 million per year in savings on drugs. I call that a \$200-million cut to the drug budget, although I can't understand, because this year alone, if you look, we spent \$93 million more on drugs than we had budgeted for, and now in the budget we say that we will cut \$200 million. In my mind, that's really \$293 million that we will cut from what we spent in the last year, and this will come by changing coverage and reimbursement of certain products. Well, I've been a politician long enough to know that means that some of the drugs that are covered now won't be covered anymore.

Who will be the winners? Who will be the losers? I don't know. But I can tell you that Epilepsy Ontario sent out a five-star alarm last week because there are serious shortages of some of the drugs that people with epilepsy need. As well, Ontario sort of stands out right now, with people having to pay out of pocket for oral cancer drugs if they are taken in their homes.

That was rather surprising, because we had a Minister of Health who is eloquent as to the need for pharmacare. We are housing here in Ontario the pan-Canadian group that looks at drug purchasing. All of the research coming out is telling us that if we were to have pharmacare—that is, the cost of drugs would be covered like a visit to a physician or a visit to the hospital—it would actually save the system, and the calculation, kind of middle of the road for Ontario, is close to \$1 billion. In the worst-case scenario, we would break even.

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We have the resources here in Ontario to look at this, but did we see in the budget something positive to move our health care system forward? Not at all. We saw the opposite. We saw a \$200-million cut to the Ontario Drug Benefit Program that is already \$93 million in the hole, so not going in the right direction.

When we look at laboratory services, it is a \$50-million cut that is in the budget for lab services. This is always worrisome, given that most diagnostics are often based on lab tests. If those lab tests are not available anymore, it becomes more and more difficult to do diagnostics.

If you look at the Assistive Devices Program—this is if you need a hearing aid, a walker, an electric wheelchair, a communication board or any kind of assistive device—they are planning a \$20-million cut in that program. This is also worrisome, because as the population ages, one of the ways to support them in their houses is through assistive devices: Make sure they don't fall, make sure they have grab bars, make sure they have the support around so that as they age and become frailer, they can stay in their homes safely. But we're not looking at improving that, Speaker. We're looking at cutting \$20

million, and in the budget it says specifically for mobility devices. This is a problem. But we had the opportunity to do better.

If you look at colostomy patients, they have had the same amount of reimbursement since 1993. If anybody can figure out a way to pay 1993 prices for colostomy supplies, please let us know. I can tell you that I have shopped around in my community to find the cheapest, and none of them are the same price they were 22 years ago. That was an opportunity to change, but here again we are seeing it go in the opposite direction, with a cut of \$20 million in that program.

If you look at home and community care, there is some good news there. In home and community care, they are making a \$750-million investment. The investment in home and community care is really focused on complex care. What we do in Ontario is that we leave elderly people in their homes with very, very little support. The typical scenario is that they don't eat properly, they don't take their meds properly, they are very isolated, they get dizzy, they fall, they break a hip and they end up in the emergency department. From the emergency department, they get admitted into our hospitals. The hip gets fixed all right, but then they need a ton of support to go back home.

If you look at what Quebec does, Quebec invests less money than we do in home care, but they do this up front. The minute you turn 75, you get a friendly visit that comes to your home. They look around as to, "How do we make sure you take your medications properly, that you eat properly, that you are supported, that you have the grab bars and walking aids to make sure you don't have a fall?" It's a whole lot cheaper to do that kind of upfront prevention with older, frailer people than it is to pay to support them.

If you look at where the \$750 million will go, it goes with a patient with complex care needs. It goes to 69 community health links. I have no problem with community health links. They are there to look after people who have very, very high needs. But you see the trend, Speaker. The trend is that we don't invest in basic disease prevention and health promotion for elderly seniors. We wait until they get into trouble to start to support them. A little bit of support ahead of a traumatic injury or a traumatic turn of events in their life would go a whole lot further in keeping them happy and safer. After a fall, they are always—we're human beings. You've fallen, you've hurt yourself and you ended up in the hospital. They will be fearful, and this is wrong. A lot of this could have been prevented with a little bit of health care dollars focused on prevention, but it is not there.

My God, 20 minutes goes by fast, eh, Speaker?

I also see that for the PSWs, there had been a promise of \$4 more an hour. Everybody understood that. Last year, they were getting \$1.50, this year \$1.50, and next year \$1, to make a total of \$4. Now, when we push a little bit, it's like, "It will be \$4 over three years, but we don't really know when the next \$1.50 is going to come." When we don't really know, I will assume that it's

because it's not coming this year, and God knows when it will come.

We talk about—there is still lots. I wanted to talk about primary care. Primary care is the door that opens the door. It's the people that you see when you need care. They are family physicians, nurse practitioners, either in an aboriginal health access centre, in a community health centre, in a family health team, in a nurse-practitioner-led clinic. Those are all different models of primary health care.

Well, the family health teams have been put on hold, with a trickling of replacement workers in there, and God knows where they will go. They're supposed to go to areas of high needs, but those areas have not been shared with anybody. It's causing a lot of grief with new physicians that have trained, that are ready to join teams. This is what they want to do. This is what we want them to do. Now there are no positions opening up in those family health teams because the government has put a moratorium on them.

If you look at the community health centres, family health teams and nurse practitioner-led clinics, there's a wage gap disparity that is just unbelievable. A nurse-practitioner-led clinic first started in Sudbury, right next to where I was working. We are really proud of them. They do a very good job. But they can't recruit and retain a stable workforce because they are the lowest-paid nurse practitioners in the entire system. They can go to the hospital, they can go to the CCACs, they can go to the LHINs—they can go pretty well anywhere—and make \$20,000 to \$30,000 more to do pretty much the exact same job, and, I would tell you, in some cases with a whole lot less responsibility than when you have your own caseload. This needed to be addressed. There's not a peep about this in the budget.

Unfortunately, I still had lots more to say about the cuts to health care but I've run out of time. Thank you for listening to me.

The Acting Chair (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Hon. Bill Mauro: I thank the member for her comments. One of the nice things about—there are two pieces. I only have two minutes here, but I want to focus quickly on health care and our continued investments in health care.

When we were elected in 2003, in my riding of Thunder Bay—Atikokan, there were 35,000 of what were referred to as orphan patients. Those are people who do not have direct access to a primary care provider. The number is actually staggering when you think about it: 35,000. With our investments since 2003 continuing in this budget—the health care budget again going up—the number of people now referred to as orphan patients in our area is down to 13,000 or thereabouts. It's not my number; that's an OMA number.

There has been significant progress made on this front, primarily due to the hiring of new doctors—5,600 more doctors than in 2003—24,000 more nurses working than in 2003, the opening of nurse practitioner clinics for the

first time in the history of the province of Ontario, family health teams, and expanding our community health centres. A variety of policy initiatives have helped to bring that number down significantly. There is still more work to be done, but great work being done so far.

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As well on infrastructure—I mentioned this briefly last week—the plant in my riding, Bombardier, when we were elected, had 200 to 250 people working in it. That plant is now up to 1,400 people, an increase of 1,200 people being employed in that plant, directly connected to our investments in infrastructure. The previous government was not committed to it. That was their policy choice. That was fine. We came in. We have made a series of massive investments in mass transit infrastructure. That has led directly to 1,200 more people working at the plant in Thunder Bay, having a huge, positive impact on the economy of Thunder Bay and the surrounding area.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments.

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: It's a pleasure to rise and add my comments to the member from Nickel Belt. I do share some of the same concerns. In fact, this past week I was at meetings with long-term-care health professionals in our riding who can't find help or can't afford to pay them, which is something that the member mentioned. A lot of these health care workers can go to agencies that have been set up by this government and they'll automatically receive \$20,000 or \$30,000 raises for doing much the same work. So they're in a real conundrum right now.

Also, we have health care workers, as we have just found out in my riding, who had full-time jobs and are now being cut back to three days a week, in some cases, in our hospitals. It has nothing to do with not wanting to give the quality of care that they wish to give; it's about the government's flatlining of the monies that they give to our hospitals in the last year. It's going to continue on, certainly with this budget.

Hospitals share the same things as industries do; certainly energy costs. Energy costs have risen, and they are carrying all these other costs. I believe the member mentioned that pharmaceuticals are going up, yet the health care system is flatlined. So how are these CEOs of hospitals and other institutions to balance their books? They start laying off people or they don't hire people or they cut wages or they cut them back to part-time instead of full-time.

I can understand the frustration that the member from Nickel Belt showed in her comments, but again, if we hadn't had the mismanagement of our finances over the last number of years like we've had with this government over here, certainly we might have been looking at a different situation.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: Boy, if there's anyone in this Legislature who knows the health budget, the health file,

inside and out, it's the member from Nickel Belt. I tell you, she is on top of this, and you're not going to pull the wool over her eyes when it comes to health care spending. When she says that the budget is going up only by 1.2% and that last year it was 2.6%, she knows what she's talking about and she knows the impact that will have on our health care system.

Now, when I read the budget—and Speaker, I have read the budget—when you consider that there's \$11 billion going in over 10 years as grants for capital projects on hospitals, I know that, in my area, Windsor is one of 40 hospital projects across the province either in the planning stage or in various phases of construction. If you're only putting \$10 billion or \$11 billion over 10 years—and I'll have to check with the member from Essex, but I believe the cost of the proposed new hospital, the mega hospital in Windsor, is close to \$1.5 billion—and there are 40 projects out there, obviously there's not going to be enough money to finalize all of these projects that are in the pipeline at one stage or another.

We all know that with an aging population and outdated hospitals we need more facilities, and you save money in the long run when you build new facilities. You give them all different flooring, geometric—you get them all set up so that you can handle more patients with fewer staff and you don't have to pay as much for air conditioning, heat and all of that. But there is not enough money in there just on the hospital file alone. Thank you for your time this afternoon.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments.

Ms. Ann Hoggarth: I'm speaking in favour of this bill. I know that this budget took a lot of work. Yes, there are some decisions that were very difficult to make. The opposition would like us to spend less. The third party would like us to spend more. The good news is that we are trying to balance things. We're trying to balance the budget. We're trying to balance keeping services and not hurting constituents, so that we can go on and have something for everyone as we go through this budget.

This budget is about creating jobs and increasing the economic growth in Ontario, which is very important. We're doing this by building infrastructure. In order to build infrastructure, you need money. We do not want to go further into debt, so yes, we have made a tough decision. No one likes to do some of the things that we've had to do, but we are making sure that we are protected and we are taking good care of our resources.

When we ran in June, we made it very clear that we would be looking into the assets that Ontario owns in order to maximize those assets, and we have done so.

Interjection.

Ms. Ann Hoggarth: Pardon me?

Interjection.

Ms. Ann Hoggarth: All right.

Also, we're going to strengthen retirement security. If you saw the article in the Star today, 68% of people said that they wanted the CPP to be strengthened. They be-

lieve that people need more money to survive, and we are doing that through the Ontario registered pension plan.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): That concludes our questions and comments. The member for Nickel Belt has two minutes to reply.

M^{me} France Gélinas: It is interesting that the minister talked about the number of orphaned patients. The facts are there, Speaker. We still have 900,000 people in Ontario who don't have access to primary care. This number has been pretty stable. We were at a million; we're now at 900,000 people over 12 years that the Liberals have been in power. This is nothing to be proud of.

When we look at some of the comments specifically on the budget, we hear things like how in fact, this budget plans for lower increases in health care spending over the next three years than any period in modern history. According to the latest figures from the Canadian Institute for Health Information, CIHI, per capita health spending in Ontario is ranked ninth out of 10 provinces, at an estimated \$3,700 per person, which compares very poorly to our cousins all the way around.

They had possibilities to do things differently. We had a possibility to address the human needs, to bring forward a pharmacare program, to bring daycare, to bring long-term care, to bring visual and oral care back to programs of the ministry, to fully fund assistive devices so that people can stay in their homes. But it requires leadership, it requires doing things differently, and we did not see any of that in the budget. We saw doing things the same way as before with less money.

This is not leadership, this is not a way forward and this is not what Ontarians want. They want their health care system to be there in their times of need, and by taking it apart brick by brick, we will do damage to it, not help it.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Ms. Eleanor McMahon: It's a pleasure to rise in this House today. I will be sharing my time with the members from Mississauga–Streetsville, Etobicoke–Lakeshore and Ottawa South.

It's my pleasure to rise in the House today to speak about Bill 91, the Building Ontario Up Act. Our government has always been committed to putting Ontarians first and ensuring that the future of our province is as bright and prosperous as possible. This is why we have moved forward on unlocking provincial assets to support the largest infrastructure investment in Ontario's history, and it is why we are building Ontario up by investing in priorities that raise Ontarians' standard of living by creating jobs, expanding opportunity and growing our economy.

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The positive reaction and feedback from many individuals and organizations across our province regarding our budget goes to show that people not only understand, but respect the decisions we are making to help Ontario thrive. In my riding of Burlington, our mayor, Rick Goldring, had the following to say about our budget, "We

are especially pleased to see the commitment to renewing and expanding public infrastructure. The investment in transit, particularly the planned electrification of GO Transit trains and 15-minute service on the Lakeshore West line in the next five to 10 years will benefit our residents, as well as serve as an added attraction for business investment in our city. The budget also reaffirms the province's commitment to the redevelopment and expansion of Joseph Brant Hospital."

Over the past year, I've had the opportunity to speak with a diverse range of stakeholders in our community about what kind of city we want and how, working together, we can bring that to fruition. Whether speaking with our business community, youth or seniors, these conversations have all underscored a common theme: the need for investments in transit and transportation infrastructure in Burlington and the greater Toronto and Hamilton area.

When we look at how to best attract jobs and investment, how to move goods to market and how to connect communities, investments in transportation infrastructure, including investments in transit and active transportation, are front and centre. We know that people who live in communities where they have a choice of travel options, including transit and active travel, as I mentioned—these communities and their citizens not only enjoy health and environmental benefits from increased exercise and cleaner air, but they also enjoy increased economic stability and productivity.

Recently, I had the opportunity to hear from transit users in our community at a local forum organized by Burlington for Accessible Sustainable Transit, or BFAST. Residents shared their transit experiences, including some of the things we're doing well in Burlington, as well as areas of needed improvement. We heard from seniors, youth, daily commuters and people with physical disabilities about the importance of continued access to and investment in transit and active transportation options like cycling and walking. This was a rich opportunity to engage with citizens in Burlington, and it underscored the ongoing need for transit investments in our community.

This budget puts forward a comprehensive plan to make an unprecedented investment of more than \$130 billion in public infrastructure over the next 10 years—an overdue investment indeed. This includes increasing the dedicated funding for Moving Ontario Forward to \$31.5 billion over 10 years and investing \$16 billion in transit projects in the GTHA. This increase is made possible by our higher target from the province's asset optimization plan and means that residents in Burlington will benefit from improvements to services across the GO Transit network, including a transition to electrified regional express rail and moving service on the Lakeshore West GO line to two-way, all-day service every 15 minutes.

This will help members of my community get to work and school, and get them home sooner. It will also serve to reduce the number of cars on the road, reducing traffic congestion, and since 20% of GHG emissions come from

the transportation sector, this will also serve to mitigate the impacts of climate change.

Health care is another topic of frequent conversation with my constituents. Ontario is investing in our province's and in Burlington's future by committing \$11 billion in hospital capital grants over 10 years. Construction has already begun on the redevelopment of Joseph Brant Hospital. I am so proud of that, because this is the first investment in our hospital in 44 years. This will include a new seven-storey tower and renovations to existing space to accommodate expanded in-patient and ambulatory services, with completion in 2018.

Attracting jobs and investment to Burlington includes a focus on our young people. I know this is a preoccupation for parents in my riding. Ontario students are key to our province's economic future. Investments in education lead to a competitive workforce that responds to labour market demands.

The government is investing \$20 million to launch Experience Ontario, a new pilot program that will support graduating high school students to better identify future goals, choose the most appropriate post-secondary education and succeed once they enrol.

When it comes to our economic security and vitality, Ontario is on target to balance the budget by 2017-18 as a result of sound fiscal management, controlling spending and a relentless focus on finding smarter and better ways to deliver services. This year marks the sixth year in a row that program spending is expected to be lower than forecast. In fact, Ontario has the lowest-cost government per capita in the country.

In closing, investing in infrastructure and in the skills of our greatest asset, our people—and in particular our young people—while at the same time managing a careful review of our assets, as well as a prudent review of how we invest taxpayer dollars, requires leadership and a steady hand.

Ontarians elected us to build Ontario up and that is exactly what we are doing. I urge all members of this House to join us in building Ontario up.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I recognize the member for Etobicoke–Lakeshore.

Mr. Peter Z. Milczyn: It's a pleasure to rise in the Legislature this afternoon to speak to budget 2015. This budget is creating jobs and increasing economic growth. We have priority investment areas that we have focused on: building infrastructure, investing in people's talent and skills, creating an innovative and dynamic business climate, and strengthening retirement security.

Mr. Speaker, especially on the infrastructure issue, renewing and expanding our roads, bridges and public infrastructure supports Ontario's industries, creates jobs and positions Ontario to better compete in the global economy while still meeting all of our other requirements in education and health care.

When Ontario invests, it is building. When it is building, it is growing. This is about ensuring our economic competitiveness through taking action to secure the timely delivery of our goods to market and to substantial-

ly reduce gridlock. Commuting times have increased by 12%, and this costs our economy \$11 billion a year in lost time and productivity. That deficit is a deficit that we are tackling, and we have to tackle it quickly to ensure that Ontario remains competitive.

Mr. Speaker, we're doing a number of other things. I don't want you to just take my word for what we're doing. On the environmental front, I would like to share with you what the Canadian Environmental Law Association has said about our budget: "The Canadian Environmental Law Association welcomed confirmation of the recently announced Ontario Electricity Support Program in today's provincial budget. This program will provide much-needed relief to low-income families suffering from 'energy poverty' where too much of their family income is eaten up by energy costs.

"Other highlights included confirmation of the province's choice to join Quebec and California in a cap-and-trade system to put a price on carbon and fight climate change."

On the issue of car insurance, this is what Matthew Turack, president of the CAA, had to say: "CAA welcomes the government's announcement requiring Ontario's auto insurance companies to offer a winter tire discount. Since 2011, CAA Insurance has been offering a winter tire discount to its policyholders. These chances not only provide drivers with an incentive to equip their vehicle with four matching winter tires, but it will help to keep Ontario's roads and road users safe during the winter season."

On the health care front, the Registered Practical Nurses Association of Ontario has said, "RPNAO supports a number of the health care initiatives put forward by the provincial government, including its continued funding for mental health and addiction services, and additional support to improve the quality of palliative care in Ontario. We're also encouraged by the government's commitment to have all categories of nurses work to their full scope of practice, reflecting the understanding that RPNs are highly skilled professionals that are part of the solution to the challenges facing health care. These are all positive steps that we applaud."

Earlier this afternoon, I had the privilege of attending a Transport Futures conference, just down the road, and to be part of the panel with my colleagues from the Progressive Conservative Party and the New Democratic Party, as well as a member of the Ontario Green Party. That panel was to discuss P3s. Mr. Speaker, you'll be pleased to hear that all panel members—from every party—agreed that there is an infrastructure deficit and that we need to continue to invest more in infrastructure.

You will be pleased also to hear that, in fact, my colleagues from across the floor also indicated that P3s, alternative financing and procurement, is a suitable way to build this infrastructure. There was remarkable agreement. There are some challenges, and there is some disagreement about precisely how we do it, but there was agreement that we need to build infrastructure and that

the government is on the right track to build the infrastructure and to create the services that Ontarians need.

I'm happy to yield the floor to my colleague from Ottawa South, Mr. Speaker.

1530

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I recognize the member for Ottawa South.

Mr. John Fraser: It's a pleasure to speak to Bill 91, the Building Ontario Up Act, 2015. I'd like to congratulate the minister on bringing forward his second budget. I'd especially like to say thank you to all those dedicated public servants who worked tirelessly over a period of a few months, not just in the Ministry of Finance—especially in the Ministry of Finance—but across all ministries to build a document that's really about the direction that we're taking with those things that are priorities to Ontarians.

The budget builds on budget 2014. It focuses on creating jobs and increasing economic growth while keeping us on the path to balance. It does this by prioritizing investments that build infrastructure, that recognize and support our people's talents and skills, create a dynamic and innovative business climate and strengthen retirement security.

Monsieur le Président, le budget 2015 appuie les choses les plus importantes pour nos familles : de bonnes écoles pour nos enfants; d'excellents soins de santé; des investissements dans l'infrastructure pour le transport en commun pour améliorer l'économie, les emplois et la qualité de vie; et l'appui pour les personnes les plus vulnérables dans notre communauté.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to applaud the investment in public transit. To the Minister of Transportation, I know that in my community of Ottawa South the second phase of light rail and public transit in Ottawa is very important to families. It's important that we get people home on time but that we also make sure that products and goods get to the places that they need to and that our roads are not congested.

I would like to speak to some things in the budget that aren't the biggest lines in the budget but I think are very important in our supportive communities. One is the seniors' grant program. There are a couple of programs in my riding of Ottawa South that benefited from that. The Somali centre for families ran a seniors' program that was very successful—not a big grant; very small. Holy Cross church had a seniors' group as well that was very supported by that.

Often we don't see the small grants that we make to people in our communities where we leverage more than the dollar-for-dollar we do in many other investments. We support those volunteer efforts in communities, as is in the budget with palliative care and our partnering with Hospice Palliative Care Ontario, to help strengthen and build the volunteer network that exists already in Ontario.

The volunteer efforts, the community efforts, are so important to palliative care. It's one of the items that I have in my mandate letter. I'm very passionate about it. I'm very encouraged by this line in the budget.

I do want to speak to a couple of things that actually talk about the future. I heard members opposite today talk about the ORPP as a tax. It's not a tax; it's about retirement security.

I've also heard people talk about climate change, and addressing cap and trade as a tax. What I have heard, too, quite frankly, is, with all due respect, a number of members not looking forward towards the future and thinking about where we're going to be 35 years from now. How do we actually make sure that our children's children have a place they can live? How do we ensure that our children and our children's children have some retirement security?

I appreciate the commentary, but I do have to say that I really don't want to leave the environment to our grandchildren. I don't want to leave retirement security to our grandchildren. I would suggest that the party opposite put some effort into encouraging the current federal government to increase CPP and to look at augmenting it.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): The member for Mississauga–Streetsville.

Mr. Bob Delaney: Sometimes the best way to look at what a city, a province, a region or even a country is doing is to look at it from the perspective of others, so let's do that with public infrastructure.

We in Canada used to feel confident that we had the best airports and highways, roads and bridges, water and electricity, public buildings and so on. But if you look abroad, both in the United States in a lot of respects and especially in Asia, it shows you that the world is in fact surpassing Ontario. All you have to do is to fly into any major Asian city such as Hong Kong or, as I've just done recently, Seoul.

The right-wing faction in this Legislature, which takes its marching orders from the Tea Party in the United States, has opposed Ontario's assistance to industry, particularly the auto industry in 2008-09. That group would have had us abrogate legally negotiated collective agreements—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Okay. I have to ask the Conservative members in particular to come to order.

The member for Mississauga–Streetsville has the floor.

Mr. Bob Delaney: That group would have had us abrogate legally negotiated collective agreements right at the depths of the recession. That's why they have only governed Ontario for eight of the last 30 years.

Ontario borrowed a lot of money during the recession—a lot of money. This province and our government borrowed all that money because the only option worse than borrowing that money was not borrowing it. It meant more than half a million Ontarians didn't see their careers torched. It also meant that Ontario emerged from the recession, by which I mean recovered all of the jobs lost during the recession, more than three years ahead of the United States.

What are Ontario's options in this budget to stay competitive with infrastructure? There aren't that many. Let's look at some of the ones that have been discussed in this Legislature.

Number one is to do nothing. That's what the parties opposite would have us do: Just ignore the problem.

Number two: Raise taxes.

Number three: Borrow more money.

Number four: Disassemble health care and education. We're not interested in that.

Let's just quickly look at those options.

Doing nothing doesn't mean that things stay the same. It means they get worse as roads and sewers, transit, electricity generation and transmission, public facilities, all of those things that we need, decay from neglect and become more expensive to either build or renew, and also are used by millions more people as our population will increase. Yet this is what the PCs and the NDP would have Ontario do. Doing nothing is an irresponsible non-starter.

Raising general taxes and borrowing money are also non-starters. Though Ontarians pay some of the lowest taxes in North America and in Europe, your price of good government can't be out of sync with the neighbouring states and jurisdictions here in North America. They are now low, and Ontario will not give away that competitive advantage.

Similarly, the extra borrowing that enabled millions of Ontario families to stay afloat during the worst recession since the Great Depression also means that Ontario needs to return to the type of structural surplus that this province had in 2006, 2007 and 2008, on a Liberal watch, to bring down our accumulated debt.

Finally, cannibalizing what Ontario has made viable and world-class to build what Ontario currently needs is a zero sum robbing of Peter to pay Paul.

That's why this budget approaches investing in transit in the way it does. It means southern Ontario won't choke on its traffic. It means Ontario will balance its budget on time and again resume paying down the accumulated debt. It also means that public services rebuilt so painstakingly in the last 12 years will be preserved. That's the Ontario that we expect.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: It's a pleasure to rise and address the comments from all of the members on the other side who spoke for the last 20 minutes.

It's interesting: The only thing that has grown in this province is debt, debt and more debt. That's the only thing that has grown in this province, because we still have the highest unemployment. We've had, for almost the last eight years, I think it is, the highest unemployment numbers in the country. So I don't understand where they come from with the job creation business, except for this: We have more people working on minimum wage in this province than we've ever had. If those are the good jobs they're talking about, they certainly missed the boat.

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Carbon tax, payroll tax—that's what they are. They are just taxes. The payroll tax will not benefit anybody for years down the road, yet our people are going to be asked to pay it.

The budget certainly is nothing more than trying to get out of the mess they're in by selling assets, which hasn't been very well thought out at all. When you start selling assets off, especially when you're in trouble—

Mr. Bill Walker: Fire sale.

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: —using, as the member here says, a fire sale, a lot of the time you don't get out of it what you should be getting out of it. You won't get the value of it. Now they want to change the law that says they don't have to pay down the debt that Hydro has. They're going to use it for something else. Speaker, that is not good economic sense. It doesn't make sense.

Of course, we know that they bought MaRS, and nobody knew about it a couple of months ago, and that certainly has not panned out as well as they had hoped. Unfortunately, their budget is based on a lot of hope, and that is not good business management.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments.

Ms. Catherine Fife: It's a pleasure to weigh in on this. It's really interesting to listen to some of the commentary. The member from Etobicoke–Lakeshore is right. We were just on a panel on the value of P3s and the questions that are out there. Obviously, the Auditor General raised a lot of questions, and so this conversation has been very welcome for us.

At the panel, though, I did raise the issue of the lowest bidder, because this is a huge concern, I think, and I raised the issue of qualitative bidding for the province of Ontario. We have so many examples of how the process is not working, how this province is not making the sound financial decisions going forward. That's because they've really accelerated a privatization agenda which is not serving the people of this province.

I look at the most recent Auditor General's report, the winter highway maintenance—this just came out last week. On this one particular issue around procuring the lowest-bidding contractor: It can cost more in the long run. It's right there in black and white. I really hope that this government is paying attention. She notes, "We noted one case where the second-lowest bidder for a contract had a much greater equipment complement than the lowest bidder, which won the contract. Specifically, for an annual contract price of only \$700,000...." But then it turned out that they didn't have the equipment to do the job, and it ended up costing the ministry \$1.7 million for 13 additional pieces of equipment. So the due diligence, the financial oversight, was not there.

It's a growing trend. Actually, this Auditor General's report builds on the last AG report, where we found out that we paid an extra \$6.5 billion in financing costs. The province should not be borrowing money at credit card rates when we can borrow money at the lowest interest rates in the history of the province.

So I really do urge the government, in the face of this budget, to look at their processes and their practices of contracting out and privatizing.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments.

Hon. Liz Sandals: One of the things that has been the centrepiece of this budget is the investment in infrastructure across Ontario: \$130 billion over 10 years, and of course, \$31.5 billion of that going to infrastructure. The thing that has been most interesting to my constituents, and actually, I think, to your constituents, Speaker, as well, is that included in that transportation and transit infrastructure budget is the funding to complete the four-laning of Highway 7 between Kitchener and Guelph. That's a project in which there's a lot of local interest, including in Wellington county, which is getting quite fed up with all the traffic over county roads trying to avoid the current congested highway. So this is welcome in both your constituency and mine, Speaker.

The other project, of course, that has gotten a lot of attention in your riding and mine is the GO service along the Kitchener route. With this budget, we will be increasing the number of trains on that route. The travel time will actually get shorter because some of the improvements that are being made on the east end of the route from Bramalea—once they actually get to Bramalea, it will be express service. I don't know about you, but one of the things I've heard from folks in Guelph is that while they love having the trains, they do take a long time when they have to stop at absolutely every stop. So the fact that it will be express partway in will really shorten the trip.

The next time I get a chance to comment, I'd love to tell you about the infrastructure in the Minister of Education's budget. I did a groundbreaking for a new Catholic school in your riding this morning—part of the money that's in this budget for infrastructure.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Thank you very much. Questions and comments.

Mr. Bill Walker: It certainly has been interesting to be in here this afternoon, listening to all of the speeches about the budget.

I'm going to talk a little bit about, in my short two minutes here—I'm going to have another 20 minutes that I'll be able to indulge you with some good facts.

Hon. Steven Del Duca: Thanks for the warning.

Mr. Bill Walker: That's not very nice. That's very inappropriate. We all have the right to speak in here.

Anyway, I want to talk about my colleague from Nipissing—the Fedeli Focus on Finance. Vic is one of those guys who pores through and really puts detail into it. He provides good, factual information in this House that perhaps would be good for the public to know.

One of the things he talked about was repeated promises. It's pretty appropriate for me, coming from Warton Willie country, that it was like Groundhog Day: the same promises made again, that same \$130 billion. But what he really shared with the people of Ontario, which they should know, is that they were only going to need a fire

sale of \$3 billion to fund that in last year's budget; now it has increased to \$9 billion. At some point, you run out of assets to use in the fire sale to try to make your budget balance.

He talked about stripping away transparency from the Auditor General. He talked about removing oversight from the integrity officer. He talked about the removal of Ombudsman oversight and the removal of freedom-of-information requests to things like the gas plants boondoggle. If we didn't have that freedom-of-information opportunity, we may never have found that they wasted a billion dollars, of which the taxpayers of Ontario got zero from a hydro and power perspective.

There was no reduction of hydro rates, one of the things that I hear and that I'm sure you do in your office, Mr. Speaker, every single day from a multitude of people. There was no reduction of debt. They're spending \$11 billion in interest. That means no services to the least fortunate in our community: parents and residents of Community Living, who are trying to figure out, "Where are my children going to be in another couple of years? Who's going to take care of them?" Seniors, health care, schools: No money is going to those, which could be if that \$11 billion was in the pot to be able to go to projects as opposed to just those interest payments, and no reduction of their addiction to overspending.

Mr. Speaker, at the end of day I'm going to talk more about this, and I'm sure you'll be highly entertained.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): One of the government members now has the opportunity to respond. I recognize the member for Ottawa South.

Mr. John Fraser: It's a pleasure to respond. Thanks to the members from Perth–Wellington and Kitchener–Waterloo, the Minister of Education and the member from Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound, who just spoke.

To the member from Kitchener–Waterloo: I was at committee with her, as well, when we were discussing AFPs, and the Auditor General clearly did not say, "You shouldn't be doing this." AFPs create the ability to provide some rigour in construction. They also increase our capacity to borrow by transferring risk. It has been used across jurisdictions in the world successfully. So I would just like to respond to her in that way.

As for the member from Perth–Wellington, he talks about debt and tax; that the ORPP is a tax and that cap-and-trade is a tax. He used the phrase "years down the road." That's the point: It's years down the road. That's one of the things we're here to think about. We're here to think about 10, 15, 20, 25, 30, 50 years down the road. We have a responsibility to do that, and I think those things that we're putting forward address concerns that are 30 years down the road, respectfully.

To the member from Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound, from the party that sold the 407, I don't think you should be talking about fire sales. But that's not really what I wanted to address in your comments.

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What I wanted to say was this: Yes, there is an interest payment on the debt. But in 2008-09, we had a choice.

We had a choice to cut services, the kinds of services that you're talking about. What are the things that cost us the most money? They are health care; they are education; they are support for the most vulnerable. Those are the things that we continue to invest in to make sure that families have those services. We had to make that choice, and I think it was the right one to do.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. Bill Walker: It's going to be a delight to talk about this budget for 20 minutes, but sadly, it's not a delight for the province and the taxpayers of Ontario, because they continue to be buried in debt and deficit.

They can talk all they want about the platitudes, about all the building up of the province, but they've had 12 years. I think if you asked most people today a very frank question, "Are you better off or are you not?" most people, like us, are going to say, "Absolutely not."

They can put all the stuffing in the window they want to try to make it look wonderful. They try in this House to use their speeches to say the province is rosy. But I think if you talk to those people in my constituency, those less fortunate people whose hydro rates continue to eat more and more and more of their budget, with the billions of dollars they have wasted in their boondoggles over their tenure, they are not better off. This budget, sadly, did not do much to address any of that.

I'm going to start off a little bit by talking, again—one of the first speakers in here was our finance critic, Vic Fedeli from Nipissing. He has produced the Fedeli Focus on Finance. Again, he very much has delved into this. He has taken time to look at this budget very carefully. He looked at the last budget very carefully.

One of the things that he said right off the bat was that, again, if you look at this budget, it's almost a mirror of the last budget. In Warton Willie country, where I come from, we have Groundhog Day once a year. This is, sadly, like the American Groundhog Day where it just keeps replaying. It's a sad, sad movie to wake up to for those people who go without because of the things that this government is doing and the added taxes, the additional times they're digging into our pocket for things like a carbon tax now, to ask for more to cover their addiction to spending.

He talked about some things that are very, very important. He talked about stripping away the transparency. They have removed the right for the Auditor General to review Hydro One's books: unbelievable, after all the things that they have messed up in the energy sector. They are now not going to allow the people of Ontario to have a look at how they run their books and the shell game that they've perpetuated over their 12 years.

We keep hearing from over there that they had to clean up messes. Well, if you can't clean it up in 12 years, it's probably time for you to go. By the way, if you were going to at least start doing some things, like stopping your addiction to spending and lowering the debt and the deficit for our poor youth, those pages in front of you—\$23,000. Every single child born into this

great province starts their life off \$23,000 in debt. That's not acceptable.

They removed the Financial Accountability Officer's ability to look into many of the programs across their mandate. They removed oversight from the integrity officer into Hydro One. They removed the Ombudsman's ability to look into the goings-on behind closed doors of this government.

We know that lots of things have happened: Ornge, eHealth, those types of things. The agreements that they created and the payments that were paid to people like Mazza to do those types of things are just deplorable and unacceptable.

They removed the freedom-of-information request. If we had not had that for the gas plant boondoggle—they were standing in this House and saying it was going to be a \$40-million hit. Sadly, I think the public of Ontario would still be accepting of a \$40-million bungle by this government, because those are pretty low numbers for them. But it came out to be \$1.2 billion, and this budget is not—

Mr. Bob Delaney: Point of order, Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Stop the clock. Point of order.

Mr. Bob Delaney: Pursuant to standing order 23(b)(i), the member isn't talking about anything close to the bill, and I would ask the member to get back to the bill.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I listened very carefully, and I'll allow the member to continue.

Mr. Bill Walker: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's sad that a member of the government House does not believe that any of the things that I've just said are part of their budget. Perhaps he should read the budget.

It's a sad state. I'm sure that the people of Ontario truly understand what's going on, and there's a member yet again trying to suggest to us that there is not debt in this budget, that they have not overspent in this budget. I'm trying to let the people of Ontario know very clearly that that is the case.

Mr. Robert Bailey: A member in leadership.

Mr. Bill Walker: A member in leadership, no doubt. I'm going to continue to try to bring the things of this budget that were challenging for me, and more importantly, challenging to the people that I've been given the privilege and honour to represent in this House. We did not see any reduction in hydro rates. In fact, with this fire sale of Hydro one, we believe, at the end of the day, the taxpayer, the senior on fixed income, most of our utilities, those administrations like hospitals and schools are going to be paying even more. The small business owner, who is the engine of our economy, is going to be paying more. The senior on a fixed income, the people from Community Living, those less fortunate people across all—as critic I have the privilege of representing community and social services and long-term care and seniors. They are going to be paying much more in hydro rates because of this fire sale.

We did not see a reduction of the debt. I'm going to say this at every opportunity I get to stand in this House and speak: \$11 billion a year is spent by this government on debt and interest payments. That has not come down. We had to see something in there indicating that number was going to come down because people are not, then, getting the services they deserve and have paid into, things like the least fortunate—I had a group of parents come to me and ask me to attend a meeting of theirs. They are parents of children, mostly adult children that are in community and social services, particularly in Community Living. Up until this point in their lives, they've been able to stay at home and live with them and they've been able to provide care for them. But they're advancing in age, and they're starting to worry, "Where will my child go if something happens to me?" We're all going to get to that same destination, so it's a very valid point. They ask me, "How can a government stand here and spend \$11 billion on interest payments but not give me some assurance that my son or daughter is actually going to have a facility and programs and services to provide long-term care for them?"

I have seniors coming to me every day, saying, "I cannot afford to keep my hydro on because I just don't have the ability to pay those bills." It saddens me to tell them that on May 1 they actually just incurred another 15% increase. Again, I believe my colleague from Nipissing said we're going to have another 10% in November and yet another 10% in January after that. That's 35% interest just in hydro, which we all have to have.

We talk about health care and schools. These hydro rates are going to have significant impacts on places like our hospitals, because if the hydro rate keeps going up there, they're on fixed income and they have to balance the budget, unlike the Ontario Liberal government that does not believe in balancing a budget. They keep purporting they will. Almost every agency out there suggests that that's probably not going to be the reality.

I really struggle with where they're going. The budget certainly didn't address a lot of the concerns that the people of Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound talked to me about.

They did not reduce their addiction to overspending. Again, this budget, even after the last time we told them we can't support you spending more than you take in. No family, no individual, no company in my riding can spend more than they bring in each year and stay in business or stay in their home. You have to make the mortgage payment.

We had lots of reaction from industry, and I'm going to quote a couple of those. "The potential damage of the ORPP to youth employment must be a priority. This tax on jobs will hurt youth first, at a time when youth unemployment is already high...."

"While we applaud the government for being the first to make changes, there is limited benefit to our industry. Major brewers will still be able to gouge our members with higher-than-retail prices, with only low-volume licensees escaping their grip."

That was James Rilett, vice president of Restaurants Canada, a group well-known to us.

The Ontario Chamber of Commerce: “The government has implemented or announced several new initiatives that will have a direct impact on business, including the introduction of a cap-and-trade system and the Ontario Retirement Pension Plan.

“The OCC calls on government to consider the negative impact that the ORPP could have on job creation, foreign direct investment, and the economy in general.”

The Canadian Federation of Independent Business: “Instead of stimulating job creation and growth in small and medium-sized businesses, the province is hurting independent business owners and employees by moving forward with its pension plan, a disguised payroll tax.”

Dr. Ved Tandan, president of the Ontario Medical Association: “The government’s budget continues to drastically underfund health care—that’s a problem for patients and it’s a problem for doctors. There are 900,000 people in this province without a family doctor”—900,000 people—“and the population continues to grow and age—this budget ignores both that growth and that unmet need and that’s unacceptable.”

Finally, Donna Rubin, CEO, Ontario Association of Non-Profit Homes and Services for Seniors: “Clearly, long-term care was far from a priority in this budget. It’s particularly disheartening because this is by no means a new need. This is the same target recommended in the government-commissioned Sharkey report on long-term care in 2008, and that same report recommended that 4.0 hours of care be achieved by 2012. The target was right then, and it is right now, yet we are still not there.”

A sad state of affairs, Mr. Speaker.

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The government likes to talk a fair game about government accountability, openness and transparency, but the fact that they never really embraced these tenets is why this administration is in the deep trouble it is today. The behemoth—again, \$11-billion or \$12-billion—deficit they racked up by wasting and overspending over the past 13 years has become an addiction.

This isn’t a one-off. This continues to perpetually happen, and yet, miraculously, what they’re going to tell us is that in two years they’re going to solve all those ills and no one is going to lose in this. There aren’t going to be any program changes; there’s not going to be any less service at the front door; there’s not going to be anybody losing jobs. Mr. Speaker, it’s a bit of pixie dust at the very best.

They spent \$7 million on consultants who advised them that they were broke and they need to start selling public assets to keep afloat. How can they justify that to a person who can’t find mental health and addiction services? How can they justify it to the people who come in to my office with children who need special services, and I have to tell them, “This government, the Liberals, will not be able to provide those because they spent \$7 million on consultants”?

Just even in my own critic role, again, we’ve had the rollout of SAMS. We were told in estimates committee that \$240 million would be the top dollar that would be spent; that would be the total. We’re now at \$272 million and counting, and guess what, Mr. Speaker? They hired yet another consultant to tell them.

Last week, I stayed here on Friday to hear that report come out. They’ve admitted that it has been a failure, but still no recourse for the families. They have 19 recommendations. Well, recommendations don’t pay the hydro bill. They don’t put food on the table for those poor families who can’t afford both of those necessities in life.

I’m not sure where they dreamed up half of this stuff. I’m not certain I trust. We’ve been asking them for a fully laid-out business plan of where this is going to work and how the numbers are all going to work. In my three years, we’ve asked for that on a number of projects and never received that, so I’m not certain that the people of Ontario are really going to buy it.

A number of my constituents are certainly not in support of the plan to liquidate Hydro One and send their hydro rates through the roof yet again. It should be noted here that legally today—the law was written that if you were to sell an asset such as Ontario Hydro, 100% of the money is supposed to go to pay off the debt of that asset. In this case, there is a \$27-billion debt, and they’re going to take \$9 billion—what they’re estimating for a sale price—and hive off \$4 billion to pay for transit.

Certainly transit is a huge issue and something that needs to happen here, but the law is the law, and they can’t continue to break the law. At the end of the day, they need to abide by the laws of our province. They have four unprecedented investigations by the OPP into certain illicit behaviours that have been alleged against them, and yet here they are again—blatantly, in a budget document—breaking the law. It simply isn’t acceptable.

I’m going to quote a resident, Michelle from Meaford in my riding: “I have yet to see evidence of any benefit for Ontario residents” in regard to the sale in that situation.

Kyle Hun from Hanover said, “The Liberals must undertake a consultative process and provide all of us with an opportunity to express our concerns.” We’ve seen that with a number of issues in here, Mr. Speaker: that there has typically been very little, if any, consultation with the stakeholder. I certainly hope they’re going to do that again, but I am not certain.

I received a call the other day from a fellow by the name of Al Diggins, of the Excellence in Manufacturing Consortium, a good friend. One of his board members is Jim McCoubrey, who owns Troy Life. They install sprinklers across the country. They were very particular in their concern with changes that are going to impact manufacturers in the industry in regard to apprenticeship programs. They’ve reduced it from \$10,000 to \$5,000 and from four years to three years. They’re saying, “How am I going to entice new apprentices into this business,” when you’re going in the opposite direction from where they believe, as an industry, it needs to be going? The

hikes that they're also concerned about in regard to hydro are going to leave them in the darkness.

Rate increases are also forcing cuts, as I've said earlier, in classrooms, hospitals and long-term-care homes. At the end of the day, there's only so much money. Salaries, benefits—all of those types of things which those people who work in those facilities deserve; they're hard-working, very caring individuals. You have to pay your utilities, and at the end of the day something has to give, because they, again, have to balance budgets—something a bit foreign to this government.

Some 60 families in my riding of Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound had their utilities disconnected in the fall of 2014 because they could not afford these Liberal energy rates. Your sale of Hydro One is doomed to drive rates a lot higher. So what is the Premier's advice to low-income families, frail seniors and public institutions who can't afford the rates anymore? Where exactly should they cut to make up the impact of their hydro increases?

Many, many years ago, when you were on the side of the Ontario public, your party leader said, “[Premier] Ernie Eves may be poised to sell off Hydro One in a desperate bid to get cash so he can throw money at the electricity crisis he has created.” Who knew that only six years later that same Liberal leader would pour billions of dollars into misguided efforts to create an alternative or green energy industry in Ontario and, as a result, let rates soar so high that they forced some of Ontario's families to have their power turned off because of the unaffordability?

Let's not forget last week: General Motors is not stopping making cars; they're just stopping making them in Oshawa. I believe we also have a firm in eastern Ontario, Goodyear, that is leaving as well, 1,000 jobs in, I believe, my colleague Randy Hillier's riding, Lanark-Addington-Lennox—I can't get all of them. It's very sad, Mr. Speaker.

We continue to see money wasted, we continue to see overspending and we don't see them changing tack very much at all.

This afternoon, very interestingly, I introduced a private member's bill, An Act to amend the Election Finances Act with respect to third-party election advertising. It was interesting, as part of the notes I created there, that in the budget there is a section—by the way, I want to assure that this isn't just something Bill Walker has dreamt up. The Elections Ontario officer has asked for this in two reports. He sees it as a glaring concern to ensure that democracy is in fact respected here.

I have asked the government to put laws in place that will put a \$150,000 spending limit and \$3,000 per riding, and that anyone in non-compliance with that law, if it was to be enacted, would actually not be able to participate as a registered lobby group or third-party interest group in the next election. We have to ensure that it's a level and fair playing field.

I'm going to quote from the budget. This is their line: “Informed by the report of the Chief Electoral Officer, the province will also move to strengthen rules around

election-related, third-party advertising to protect the public interest.” I'm challenging the Premier and her caucus members to actually vote for my bill to ensure there is fairness and that all people can participate in democracy in a fair way.

Interestingly, on the same page, page 223 of the 2015 Ontario budget, the government started to do things in regard to government advertising. What they suggest they're going to do—if you read their words, it doesn't really say this, but what it really means is that they're again taking ability away from the Auditor General to be a watchdog in regard to election advertising. They're going to tweak some words that allow them to bring someone from the community and purport how well the government is doing.

It's an abuse, in my opinion, and it shouldn't be something that should go through. It's something that I hope they will actually look at with true openness and accountability and respect of democracy in our great province, and vote for that budget bill at the end of the day—sorry, not the budget bill but my private member's bill.

This budget has continued to concern me in a number of ways. The Financial Administration Act makes it so that new accounting regulations cannot be imposed on Hydro One. How can this be in the spirit of accountability, openness and transparency? How can they think this going to allow the public to have greater trust in them? The Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act, schedule 13, exempts the ORPP Administration Corp. and Hydro One from freedom-of-information requests.

This government has doubled the entire debt of our great province in their 13-year reign of experiments and terror. They have a debt and a deficit level that are unprecedented, and yet they want to actually put in a pension plan, and they want people to believe, “You can trust us as the financial gurus of the country.”

What they're failing to tell the good people of Ontario—they have kind of tried to use one-liners that say everyone deserves a pension. What they maybe should be is frank with the people and say when this pension will be payable. At very best guess it's probably 30 to 40 years down the road, and that is if they were to manage it properly.

I would suggest, too, that there is a lot of doubt in the community—certainly in my community of Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound—that these folks can manage any kind of finances. At the end of the day, it will be yet another boondoggle. They're trying to build another revenue source for themselves so they can continue their addiction to their spending ways.

I want to go back to some of the things, in my last couple of minutes here, and just recount. We wanted to see a reduction in hydro rates. We wanted to see a reduction of debt. They spend \$11 billion on interest. That gets us nothing at the front line for our seniors, for low-income folks, for people on fixed incomes and certainly for people from Community Living, who again have come to

me almost in tears asking what is going to happen to their adult children when they pass on.

Our health care and our schools are going to be impacted, not to mention small businesses. Small businesses across my riding are suggesting, “You’re going to add a payroll tax to me. You’re going to add in the pension tax. You’re going to add in cap-and-trade,” or carbon, whatever tax you want to call it. They are at the end of their limit. How do we do this? Particularly the hydro rates that are going to double and triple again over the next four years—we’ve seen no ability for them to actually honestly step up and say, “We’re going to stop over-spending. We know that we have to cap—”

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They have a fiscal plan, so they say, in this budget, but again, Vic Fedeli is very clear when he says they pulled that out of the air. There is no plan. They just pulled some numbers and want the great taxpayers and citizens of this province to believe that they are good managers of money. We all know that’s not the fact; that’s not certainly the case in their 12 or 13 years. At the end of the day, they have taken a lot of accountability, they’ve taken a lot of transparency, and the people of Ontario, I think at the end of this budget, are going to be worse off, which is hard to believe after last year’s budget.

I started my remarks by saying it’s Groundhog Day. The same old, same old: They’re going to spend more, they’re going to tax more, and at the end of the day, the people of Ontario are going to continue to pay through the nose for their inefficient and misguided direction.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Paul Miller: I’m going to go back in the memory banks here to the 1990s. I was a city councillor in Stoney Creek at the time, and one of our councillors sat on the local hydro commission. It was Stoney Creek Hydro. I remember the days when my friends to the right deregulated hydro. It was the worst thing that ever happened to our city, Stoney Creek.

We also created all of the middlemen. We had the guys who would—transmission, storage and all these other things. Well, guess what, folks? In my last hydro bill that I got from Ontario Hydro, the transmission, storage and delivery was more than my usage. I never thought I would see the day, but that’s where it’s at now.

Is Hydro in trouble? It is in trouble. Did they have to do something? Yes, they had to do something; however, to put it in the hands of privatization is not a good thing because I saw that in the 1990s. We had all these middle companies step up to the plate, and these companies have been a disaster. Now, what these people are doing is handing it over again to the private sector—only a percentage, according to them, but that 60% will end up having the vote over the 40% eventually, and we’ll end up with no say.

I’ll tell you right now, folks, mark my words—you heard it here first: Hydro will not go down in costs. Expenses are going to go up in the private sector for us. We’re going to pay probably the highest hydro rates in

North America by the time this fiasco is done. Give it five years; give it six years. You can go back to this speech and remember me saying this, because I said it in the 1990s when they did it, and look where we are. That’s going to happen, trust me. I could say a lot more about this and I will later on if I ever get to speak to this. But I’ll tell you right now, history is a good teacher, and obviously people are not paying attention to history.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Chris Ballard: I appreciate the opportunity to speak to this, to respond for a couple of minutes. The member opposite has referred to that famous American movie Groundhog Day. It’s one of my favourites with Bill Murray, but in no way does this budget have anything to do with that movie.

The province of Ontario is at a transformational point in its history, a pivotal point in its history. We need to either go forward or go backwards, and this budget will move the province forward.

This doom and gloom that emanates from the opposite side really gets to be a bit much with time, but I don’t have to speak on behalf of the budget. Let’s hear what some other people have said about the budget. Let’s hear from the mayor of Sault Ste. Marie, for example, who says, “Our roads need work, our aqueducts need work. We’re all aware that our water infrastructure needs ... work. The budget was good news in that sense.”

The CEO of CivicAction says, “Transportation is our lifeline and we got a series of much-needed infusions this week. This is great progress toward securing the investment we need.”

It’s not just us on this side of the House who are saying good things about the budget. How about the Hamilton Chamber of Commerce, which “applauds the Ontario government for formalizing its commitment to a fully funded rapid transit project in Hamilton in the 2015 budget tabled today”?

Mr. Speaker, I could go on. Why not quote the Toronto Star in its editorial? “The plan put forward by the government promises almost \$50 billion for roads, bridges and highways in the greater Toronto and Hamilton region alone.”

We can go forward. That’s what this budget is all about.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): The member for Sarnia–Lambton.

Mr. Robert Bailey: I’d like to comment on the remarks from the member from Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound. I thought Groundhog Day was required viewing for the Liberal caucus. That’s what one of the members told me, that when you go there as a new member, that’s the first thing they do: have you sit through it. You know the old movie The Candidate, with Robert Redford? Well, it’s as required viewing for the Liberal caucus as Groundhog Day, because they know they’re going to revisit, revisit and revisit a number of these things.

Anyway, I think the member from Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound made a great rendition as he rhymed off a number

of the issues in his own riding, which every member should talk about. I know we have issues in my riding as well. The member from Newmarket–Aurora was quoting a number of those people who were applauding the budget. Just imagine, member, what we could do in this province if we had that \$11 billion in interest that we're paying every year to the bankers and the offshore people who lend money to this province. I think they're the only ones that really love this province because they're the ones that are getting money every month in debt payment.

The member also spoke about Oshawa, with GM and 1,000 jobs. That's just 1,000 jobs in Oshawa that are going to Lansing, Michigan. There are a number, probably four to five jobs for every one of those auto worker jobs, that would be auto-related that are probably going to disappear as well—Goodyear rubber, further east.

We talked about third-party spending. I certainly applaud the member from Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound with his private member's bill. Finally we might see something in this province. There's a guy with vision. I would urge this government, and the third party as well, to support that bill. Let's do something about this third-party spending, because it certainly is—I won't say. There's a word I would say, but I don't say it here. But it certainly needs to be changed. You all know what that word is, ladies and gentlemen out there. You know that word, what this spending has done to this province. Someday, I'd like to do an hour on that. I could speak for an hour on the—

Interjection: Heifer dust.

Mr. Robert Bailey: Heifer dust—that's what my great friend Ernie Hardeman said about what that spending has done to this province.

We talked about the ORPP—okay. I guess I'm out of time, Mr. Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: I guess, still with the movie theme, we're talking about Groundhog Day. I want to tell you about a movie I saw on the weekend. It's called I'll Be Me, and it's the Glen Campbell story. It was a fundraiser for the Alzheimer Society. I highly recommend to anyone in the House who has the opportunity to go and watch this documentary on the life of Glen Campbell, a very famous singer, of course, and his battle with Alzheimer's. It's documenting his last tour and it shows how Alzheimer's has affected his memory and his life. As we know, because we've all introduced petitions in this House, there's no known cause or cure for Alzheimer's. It will be \$15.7 billion in the total economic burden by 2020—not that far away, Speaker. I know there is \$2 million in the budget for the brain injury centre in Ottawa. We have to do more research into this disease.

Just by way of wrapping up, let me also say that over the weekend I had the opportunity yesterday to attend the celebration of the back-to-back national championships won by the Windsor Express, the National Basketball League of Canada champions. It was a nasty final. The

Halifax team got into a brawl on the floor before the game. In the morning of the game, punches were thrown. The team left. Their coach has been banned for life and fined heavily. Their assistant coach has been banned for life and fined heavily. Some of their players have been fined. But they left town. They forfeited the game. It's not the way we wanted to win, but we did win back-to-back championships. I look forward to the next season, especially if these two teams meet again.

Thank you for your time.

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The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Thank you. That concludes our questions and comments. I return to the member for Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound.

Mr. Bill Walker: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I thank the member from Hamilton East–Stoney Creek for his comments, and certainly my good friend from Windsor–Tecumseh and all the work he does down there.

I'm going to focus a little bit more on the member for Newmarket–Aurora. He said a couple of things there. He talked about Groundhog Day and how he didn't think there were any of the same things in this budget. But we saw a deficit, we saw more taxes and we saw more spending than revenue, which has been indicative of the three years that I've been here. So I would suggest to you that there are a lot of things that have repeated themselves.

He also suggested that there are municipalities out there that need roadwork and water and sewers. I find that very interesting, because I brought a letter to this House, to their government. Owen Sound this year experienced huge freezing of their water pipes. Their infrastructure is in a real mess. What they basically said was, "No, no, no. Tough luck. Take it out of the reserves." Well, they don't have reserves like a government like this that can just dig in and continually ask for more.

You know, it was interesting. They came out and found money—I think gift cards, actually—when the ice storm happened here in downtown Toronto. That was created by cold weather. But yet when you ask for Owen Sound, they say, "Oh, no, no. That's a whole different story. You go back and do it yourself."

I also want to bring up the winter maintenance. That certainly has been coming up in the House here a bit across a lot of municipalities. It's interesting that this government—sadly, I don't see the person here today who probably wants to answer to these. But the winter maintenance program that a lot of municipalities are asking about—they put dollars to make themselves look better over the safety of the residents of Ontario. This budget should have addressed that as well.

My good friend from Sarnia–Lambton, an exceptional member in this House, talked about required viewing of the Groundhog Day movie. I think they absolutely have watched it, Bob Bailey. I think two things have happened. I think, one, there's a mountain of debt, so there's always a shadow forecasted over them. The other is that they're digging that hole so deep with their debt that they can't see the sunshine there either. So every time they do

watch Groundhog Day, it is a snowstorm. It is a definite winter snow job that this government is trying to pull over the people of Ontario.

This budget is yet again—it's Groundhog Day. "It's rosy, it's wonderful, it's good. Just trust us; we're all fine."

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Ms. Catherine Fife: As always, it's a pleasure to stand in this House on behalf of the residents and citizens of Kitchener–Waterloo, to bring their concerns to this place and also to raise some concerns with regard to the budget that was presented last week.

I've been trying to think of a different title for this. It's called Building Ontario Up, and I think that is a contradiction in and of itself, because there are measures contained within this budget that will have a long-standing negative effect on the economy of this province, on the people of this province, and ultimately on the social fabric that all of us, I think, care about.

Because the major thrust of it obviously is built around privatizing a strategic public asset in Hydro One, a lot of my comments are going to be focused around why that decision is the wrong decision. I certainly hope that the government side is listening, because I'm going to challenge the math on that deal.

I'm also going to be talking, of course, about the ORPP Administration Corp. and the concerns that we have around how the government is moving forward in potentially creating a private-public pension fund, which is not what they promised, obviously, in the last platform.

I'm going to be talking about the Taxation Act and some of the cuts to the tax credits, which will have a negative impact on some of the things that are actually going well in the province of Ontario. It shouldn't all be about negativity; it should be about trying to find some consensus.

The major thrust, though, that I have to bring to this discussion is the feedback I have received around the sale of Hydro One. I know our leader, Andrea Horwath, was in Kingston this last weekend and travelling around southeastern Ontario. I think the feedback that she got is that a lot of people did not know the full impact of this decision, if they knew that it was going to be happening. I think there is a responsibility that we all share to ensure that people have the right information going forward.

Certainly with Bill 91, the main thrust, as I said, focuses on treating Hydro One and its subsidiaries as non-public entities. The implications of this, I'm going to get into in a little bit. But I think one of the major problems for us as New Democrats is that the decision to sell Hydro One will have long-standing impacts on the revenues that the province brings in from that public asset. It will obviously affect the reliability of service. If we can learn anything from the past, the decision to sell off the 407 has had a drastic impact. It still resonates with people each and every day. When they drive it and they get their bill, it obviously is a tangible thing that connects—they often say that an enraged electorate is an engaged elector-

ate. I'm sure there are a lot of people on the 407 who are avoiding the infrastructure deficit in the province of Ontario. That is an issue; there's no doubt about it. But to have the government stand up, day in and day out, and say, "We're going to do something about this" after 13 years of being in this place is a bit of a slap.

We are definitely concerned with why the sale of Hydro One is being accelerated. It is being accelerated. There are some schedules in this bill which actually fast-track the lack of oversight over Hydro One even before it is sold.

I think I'm going to that one first. I'm going to take on this growing trend by the government to remove oversight. I understand sometimes why they're so concerned about that increased scrutiny and oversight into these public institutions and public assets. One has only to look at the Auditor General's reports that have come forward, from the last AG and this current AG, on the way infrastructure is funded—she has raised some serious concerns; you may not like it; those concerns are shared by a lot of people in this province—and the AG report most recently on road maintenance.

The role that independent officers of this Legislature play in exposing inconsistencies and, quite honestly, sometimes incompetencies of the government of the day, regardless of who it is, is so important. I think the fact that this budget has schedules which accelerate the lack of oversight—there's no other way to put it. The moment even one single share of Hydro One is sold, Hydro One will not be deemed an agency of the crown any longer, and schedule 3 strips the Auditor General of powers. No more value-for-money audits over there. We will not have that oversight, as individual legislators, nor will the people of this province.

Schedule 10 cuts out the Financial Accountability Officer after six months. It really is unfortunate. We just finally got the FAO hired. He's just got nicely settled, and he's also been told to move already. We just got him here. The first budget, after two months—he's only been here for two months. In the first budget, the government removes his oversight over Hydro One. That's schedule 10.

In schedule 11, the Financial Administration Act is amended to limit our ability to obtain any information on Hydro One. So even though the government says, "We're not privatizing; we're still going to have a majority of the shares," we are essentially losing complete control of this public asset. What's happening here is really the wholesale stripping of access to any information about an asset that the people, currently, are the largest shareholder of. That is not being open; that is not being transparent.

It's so strategic. We see it so blatantly, so openly, that this government is running away from accountability and oversight. Once Bill 91 gets royal assent, those changes are effectively happening, and not even when the IPO comes into effect. It is shocking.

There's a little bit of a ripple effect, actually, out in the province of Ontario. My own local hydro, Waterloo North Hydro, is having its AGM this upcoming week. Through

the grapevine, we've heard stories that they've got this new proposal to modernize. Any time I hear that word now, I think somehow the people of this province are going to lose, and that's definitely a concern for us in Waterloo. But the government has been actively suggesting, and perhaps providing taxable incentives for local hydros to sell off. Those municipalities rely so heavily on that revenue.

It was also disturbing, the way that the whole—the lock-up was most unfortunate, the lock-up on beer and the sell-off of Hydro One. We've never seen anything like that, and we've never been locked up over a banker's report. It just has never happened. It was not even commercially sensitive; they had leaked most of it already, prior to it.

1630

But certainly that day, there was this very shiny bauble over here of beer and this big, big issue of selling off Hydro One. I think my local paper actually summed it up very nicely. I just want to share the editorial from that day. It said, "Beware of Ontario Liberals who tinker with the marketing of beer while selling off most of the province's energy transmission system. And beware, especially, when they announce both initiatives on the same day."

"In what could be described as not just a smokescreen but a suds screen"—which is quite witty, I hope you will agree—"Premier Kathleen Wynne last Thursday trumpeted her plan to let selected grocery stores sell six-packs of beer—though never more cheaply than the Beer Store. To a large extent, this was a sideshow, an intentional distraction to the Liberals' real agenda."

"As beer lovers gleefully shouted 'Hallelujah,' too little attention was paid to the day's truly revolutionary change—the impending sale into private hands of 60% of Hydro One. Lots of people like beer. But everybody needs electricity."

I think they pretty much nailed it there. It's a beautiful thing in the province of Ontario when people see through a suds screen, like what happened on that day.

They have also raised the same concerns as we did. There's nothing to stop the private investors, who will collectively own most of Hydro One, from joining forces and ganging up on the government. In fact, that was probably one of the biggest issues that we raised in our financial briefing: The bill, as it's crafted, does not protect the government or the taxpayer from collusion. So you are leaving the door open to full privatization. I hope that it's not with full intention, I hope that it's just a little glitch, but you can't blame us for raising that red flag.

This editorial goes on to say, "Let's not delude ourselves. The driving force behind this sell-off is not the Liberals' desire for a better transmission system. It is, instead, this debt-strapped government's hunger for money." I think they've nailed that. As I said, it's good to see that folks really got it.

What is also very surprising is that there's this premise that the Premier sort of brings to this House every day during question period: "People knew we were going to sell off Hydro One." People did not know that you were

going to do this. They have not had an opportunity to voice their concerns over this proposal. They did not know that you would get to the point of such desperation that you would be willing to sell off a strategic public asset, a quick cash settlement for purely political purposes. They did not get that, and I hope that you will understand that.

There are certainly some other media sources, obviously, who have accurately summarized what will happen. This is from James Laxer: "Not only will the sell-off draw in the funds to pay off the utility's debt, it will bring in the capital to underwrite much needed investments in public transit in the province, according to Ms. Wynne."

"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 over the decades to come."

How can you not see this? I mean, I am friends with some of you on that side of the aisle. I have great respect for some of you on that side of the aisle. I understand that you are in a fiscally challenging position, and I also understand that by many of the decisions you have made, you have put yourself there. But there is no good reason to sell off this asset, and you do not have a mandate to do so.

It is a disturbing trend. It's a disturbing trend around short-sighted fiscal decisions which seem great at the time, but have long-term negative impacts. We've seen this on several privatization experiments, if I can put it that way, in health care, in the IT sector, in the contracting out of labs results. We've seen it in road maintenance. We have the proof; we have the evidence, Mr. Speaker. It is here. It is unfathomable that a government like the Liberals, who are well into this majority government and who have—in year one of a four-year mandate, this is the time to be courageous. It is not an act of courage to sell off a public asset which generates so much income.

Mr. Laxer goes on to make the point that keeping hydro public is such a pivotal part of our history as a province. He actually mentions Mr. Adam Beck. He says: "Selling 60% of Hydro One stands this historic model on its head. Yes, the province will gain a one-time hit from the sale. But the new owners will make returns on their investment that are far in excess of the cost to the province if it chose instead to borrow to invest in public transit. Bay Street and private investors, not to be confused with philanthropists, are already jumping up and down at the prospect of tapping into an assured profit stream going on into the indefinite future. And, of course, consumers will pay more for their power."

This is the one thing that we know for a fact: The Premier and Mr. Clark have not been able to make any guarantees around rates going up. They have not been able to do that. We've seen from the history of the deregulation and privatization, which was started by the PC caucus just over a decade ago, that energy costs, the costs of hydro, have tripled, because when profit drives the agenda, profit wins—

Ms. Cindy Forster: Look at the 407 costs.

Ms. Catherine Fife: The 407, yes—and people lose, Mr. Speaker.

We are certainly in a place in our history where we should not be making short-sighted decisions like this. The government should know better. What we've seen, as well, is that, aside from the lost revenue—and I want to challenge the government on some of their assumptions around where they're going to get the money from. I also want to remind people that Hydro One is a very profitable company.

It was really interesting that Mr. Clark challenged the premise that governments are not in a position to self-finance infrastructure. The interest rates right now in the province of Ontario are at a historic low. Governments can borrow money at as low as 3%. It's not like they can pick up and leave—although I've joked that I've seen some of the members across the row who would like to pick up and leave. But the fact of the matter is that Mr. Clark's assumptions were wrong on that.

I also want to point out the fact that the estimated sale value of Hydro One right now is estimated at \$16 billion, but Hydro One earns a net income of about \$800 million a year. That's a return on investment of 5%. That's pretty good.

Meanwhile, interest rates have fallen to next to zero. A benchmark 10-year Canadian government bond has a current yield of less than 1.4%. The government's return on its Hydro One assets has been getting bigger since 2009. This is an asset that is actually improving on the revenue side of the House for the government. This is something that's actually working. And yet, this government seems determined to shut the door on something that is actually benefiting the people of this province and bringing much-needed revenue into Queen's Park.

As I mentioned, the return on Hydro One assets has been getting bigger since 2009, corresponding with a decrease in borrowing costs. If debt interest versus lost income is the question, then every year it makes less sense to sell Hydro One, not more. Follow the money on this. This is not about ideology; this is about a revenue stream that is coming into the province's coffers that is reliable, that is consistent.

There's one other thing that I want to challenge. Mr. Clark's report also has a questionable claim that this sale will result in private sector discipline, which will deliver huge benefits for the government and consumers. I have to challenge that. There is no precedent for that at all—except that elsewhere in the report, Clark is reassuring us that the government isn't really giving up control, despite only retaining a 40% stake. If the other stakeholders have 60% and the government has 40%, the last time I checked, that is not a majority of control.

In other words, Clark thinks government discipline will prevail at Hydro One. He does. He thinks discipline will be the overarching factor that's driving the so-called innovation and profits of Hydro One. The only thing that is going to actually drive the way that policy is created at

Hydro One is profit. That's what the shareholders want. Then, the people in this province come second.

1640

Aside from the beer-and-Hydro One show that came out, and the fact that obviously this government is committed to going through with this—and what a lack of consultation on the Hydro One deal. Long-standing Liberals have called. I had this one conversation with an 87-year-old on Friday, because I do constit calls. I call them up because they've called the office—especially seniors, because they know. They've seen the evolution of public power. They know. One fellow told me that when it first started, he was paying one cent a kilowatt. That's how old this fellow was. But for the first time, this 87-year-old constituent has come down to my office, he has the petition, and he's going around his apartment complex and getting signatures, urging this government not to sell Hydro One. As I said, an enraged electorate is often an engaged electorate. It shouldn't take that, but we do have people in this province who fully understand what is at risk.

It doesn't make sense that this Premier is so committed to doubling down on a gamble that has proven in other sectors and in our own province's history not to pay off. We are losing oversight. We are losing an important and consistent revenue stream. Our rates will go up—and we have the highest rates, obviously, in the country. This will have a negative impact on the manufacturing sector, who have long been lobbying for an industrial energy rate so that they can improve their productivity, so that they can hire more people, so that they can actually stay in the province and not pick up and leave. And yet, what are they having? This is so evident to so many people. One has to wonder who will win. If it's just about politics, then it's a sad day in the history of this province. The high rates, the reliability and the loss of revenue: Those are sound arguments not to sell off Hydro One; they truly are.

There are so many other people who have weighed in on Hydro One, and I do feel it's necessary to put it on the record, because I think they're committed to going forward with it. I think that the decision has already been made. I think that they have already made the commitment of the funds, and we've actually seen that with the power workers. The funding is supposed to be dedicated for infrastructure, and yet there's no mechanism in this budget to ensure or guarantee that that money will actually go to transit and infrastructure. It's not there. If they were truly committed to making sure it got to the Trillium Trust, then it would be there, but it's not—just like they have not protected around collusion around the shareholders in the membership.

This is from Sheila Block; I read her often. She goes on to say this plan obviously “includes fully privatizing part of Hydro One and selling off a majority stake in what remains.

“The government is trying to position this sale as an ‘asset swap’....”

We are challenging that assumption. This is not an asset swap, because you have already proven that you're not fully dedicated to selling off Hydro One for infrastructure, because you've already used the proposed money that you don't even have yet to settle a collective agreement with a union. That has to be challenged—but in doing so, the government is ignoring its own previous expert advice.

This is another thing: I love the fact that the Liberal government have these special committees, they have these round tables, they commission these select committees on everything from mental health to infrastructure, but the previous expert advice—one was from Metrolinx and one was by Anne Golden—none of those reports ever suggested selling off vital public assets.

This government had to go and find a special individual who would do his so-called pro bono work to give them a report that told them to do what they already wanted to do in the first place. That's essentially what happened here. Mr. Clark said that he was working pro bono. We found out that they spent \$7 million on consultant reports. It's incredible. To your friends and your family—it's the friends and family program here at Queen's Park. If you can get in, you're good to go. You've just got to generate a report that the Liberals want to hear, that they want to pay attention to. What a shame that that happened. We had to FOI that in the interest of transparency and accountability. We did so, but we wanted to see the actual reports. We wanted to see what the consultant said because the taxpayers paid for it. We've never seen the details. I think there were eight individual consulting firms that were paid a good sum of money to do some sort of analysis around the sale of Hydro One and six-packs of beer in a Walmart store. We, to date, have not seen any of that.

Back to Sheila Block and the five major reasons why you should not privatize Hydro One: "Privatization would be a bonanza for Bay Street but bad news for Main Street." So far, if you follow the money, there are going to be certain people who have already benefited, actually—the \$7 million.

The second is, "The province's finances will suffer if it privatizes Hydro One." I've already sort of made that case, I think, as have others.

The third reason: "A review of similar privatization schemes in Canada and internationally suggests that privatizing Hydro One will very likely increase rates." I don't think anybody is challenging that. "Nova Scotia, which privatized its electricity system a generation ago, now has the highest electricity prices in Canada. We know that a private operator will likely borrow money to pay for the purchase and, later, pass that cost on to customers. Because a private corporation is profit-oriented, it won't discriminate between high-income and low-income hydro consumers—everyone will pay more while receiving fewer public services because of lost revenues to Ontario." That pretty much sums it up; it really does.

There's this premise that Mr. Clark sort of drums up that privatizing part of Hydro One will increase innova-

tion. I strongly challenge that premise and so does Sheila Block. She says, "Innovation will suffer. Ontario Hydro has been used with modest success as a public policy tool to promote industrial development, to cushion the impact of rising rates on consumers, and to green our economy. For example, in recent years Hydro One has been directed by government to prioritize the infrastructure investments required to enable renewable electricity sources. A profit-driven ... entity would not have made these green choices when other infrastructure investments would have offered higher return on investment." Profit will be the driver of policy. That will happen. That has happened already in the history of this province.

Then, of course: "Ontario's track record with partial privatizations doesn't inspire confidence." I should not have to stand in this House and remind this government that the "eHealth scandal resulted in \$16 million of untendered contracts going to consultants, along with extravagant pay hikes and bonuses. The Ornge ambulance scandal was accompanied by enormous salaries, corruption, and failures in delivering vital public services."

Instead of actually taking a stand in this first year of a four-year mandate, the Premier has chosen to make a serious policy decision with long-term consequences and short-term gain. It is genuinely surprising to people, it really is.

I am thinking back during the election when the Premier visited Walkerton, for instance. She did a political tour and stood up in Walkerton and talked about the risks of excessive privatization without the appropriate levels of oversight and accountability.

She went there and it was a political hit. Some people criticized her for doing so, and yet she's living this today as the Premier of this province because she was the transportation minister for a long time and she started the whole process of the privatization of road maintenance. So when we got this Auditor General's report last week and we found out that there is a lack of oversight on this important public service—it is Canada. The businesses that secured the contracts from this government should have the proper equipment to clean a road of salt and snow. They should have the appropriate skill set. What did they find? They said that "the procurement process did not adequately factor in contractors' ability to deliver required services." They found that procuring the lowest bid and contractor can cost more in the long run—this is a recurring theme here at Queen's Park. We found that the audit targets were not being met. We found that there was overreliance on contractors self-reporting their performance—self-reporting: "Yes, I'm doing a very good job today. Thank you very much."

Ms. Cindy Forster: Contractors supervising contractors.

1650

Ms. Catherine Fife: Yes. Maybe we need a road maintenance ombudsman, Mr. Speaker. We've got a beer ombudsman. I was in Niagara this week and some of the people were saying, "When are we going to get a white wine ombudsman?"

Interjection.

Ms. Catherine Fife: You like that, Steve.

The lack of oversight is a completely emerging trend. It is becoming the new norm here. This government can introduce a bill called openness, accountability and transparency, and yet the Financial Accountability Officer has been here for two and a half months, and already they've written him out of major oversight. Obviously, we have grave concerns about this.

Just on that same theme, I've had the privilege, really, of asking the Premier directly about the changes around advertising here at Queen's Park. Once again, these concerns come from the Auditor General. She came out specifically—I mean, the day that she raised the road maintenance report, thankfully, she also said there is a section in the budget which changes the definition of "partisan." How partisan of you to change the definition of "partisan." The Queen's Park briefing actually did a really good job of doing an overview, and they quoted the AG; but at the end of the day, these changes step over the bounds of what is reasonable for her as an independent officer of this Legislature.

She goes on to say that the changes to government advertising rules in the budget implementation bill could allow taxpayer dollars to fund partisan advertising and turn the Auditor General's office into a rubber stamp. This is what Bonnie Lysyk says: "The government could flood the province with self-congratulatory and self-promotional advertising that would be of little practical use to the citizens paying for it," she said at Queen's Park last Wednesday, where she was releasing this report. "Equally significant, these amendments would transform the role of the Auditor General into that of a rubber stamp because they would oblige us to approve an ad submitted to us as being in compliance with the amended requirements even though, in our opinion, it was clearly partisan." The current rules have been in place since 2004 and were particularly aimed at stopping the kind of taxpayer-funded advertising that took place under the former Premier.

The Government Advertising Act now prohibits certain aspects, like ads that include the name, voice or image of a member of the executive council or a member of the assembly, and the proposed rules keep the restrictions on using the name, voice or image of an MPP, so that is still in place. However, the language around fostering a positive impression of the governing party or promoting the partisan political interest of the governing party is taken out.

Well, isn't that convenient? This morning I asked them if they're changing these rules to sell the sell-off of Hydro One, because, as I mentioned, so few people actually know how drastic this plan is, but they may be hearing it very quickly from this government in their own ads, which now the Auditor General is not going to have oversight of.

She goes on the say that if the budget is passed unchanged, she will recommend her office no longer review government ads and the responsibility be placed with the

ministry instead. So basically she's saying, "I'm not interested in rubber-stamping partisan ads." She has said that. She has raised this concern with the government.

Of course, that day the Treasury Board president was responding. She said that the amendments are necessary because the Auditor General was rejecting too many ads that should have been legitimate. In the opinion of the Liberal Treasury Board president, she wasn't able to get her ads through the Auditor General, which is really interesting, because the AG's office said that it only rejected less than 1% of 7,200 ads. So that 1% caused this massive change around oversight around partisanship in advertising from the government. You can't stand up in the House and say you're truly committed to accountability and transparency and, at the same time, be changing the rules of engagement for advertising in the province of Ontario.

Ironically, the ads that were turned down by this government were actually not reviewed by this AG. So they don't want to hear it. There are new rules of engagement here at Queen's Park, and I just want to say publicly, because you haven't heard it that much, but I just want to thank the Auditor General and encourage her to keep up the good work. She certainly is keeping us busy on this side of the House.

Ms. Cindy Forster: Regardless of the frontal attacks on her.

Ms. Catherine Fife: Yes, and even though all of these systems are very complex, she's doing a really good job. I was so disappointed the day that the AG report came out and the Minister of Energy said, "Well, these are complex." This particular Auditor General—she was running Manitoba Hydro for a number of years, so I don't think it was too complex.

That's what I want to say on Hydro One: It's a bad decision; it doesn't make financial sense; you haven't got a mandate to sell it; and we're going to be paying for a long time. I know that there are people on that side of the House who must share the concerns.

There are other ways to generate revenue for infrastructure. We have some creative ideas. We have some long-standing ideas. You actually have the tools within your own toolkit to actually generate the funding. As I said, there has never been a better time, actually, to self-fund these projects.

The important thing around the ORPP Administration Corp. is that it's hard to get to a lot of the substance of what's going to be happening with this, because most of the changes are going to reside in regulations, which, of course, has also been a long-standing issue for us. It does remove the possible changes from the House, because we can't find out exactly what you're going to be doing with it.

But you did have one section in the budget where you were putting out an RFP; it said the government is going to put out an RFP to a third-party corporation or organization to manage this. Obviously, we have some concerns around that. Namely, of course, that the corporation will not be subject to the Corporations Information Act and

so, therefore, not required to file information about directors and officers for public purposes. Imagine establishing a public pension plan with private oversight and excluding the people of this province from knowing who those people are.

Section 35 states that the corporation and its agents may be paid from the pension fund for administering and investing the fund, including for services provided before the pension plan is established. So people are going to get paid even before the fund is established. We also learned in the financial briefing that they'll get to set their own remuneration—and nobody shakes their head at this. I would encourage my colleagues on the other side of the aisle to actually have a look at that.

Ms. Cindy Forster: They'll probably set their own management contracts with their severance packages as well.

Ms. Catherine Fife: Severance packages, yes. The concern about this is that if you look at other jurisdictions that have adopted this model and you tie performance to their salary and bonuses, some of the highest-paid public servants in BC come from the board and the managers of the board who are actually managing the fund.

So if you're going to establish a public pension plan, do it right the first time. Make it a true not-for-profit and ensure that any profit that is made through dividends actually go back into the fund. I mean, this is not an overly complicated thing.

When you look at the ORPP as well, there are a number of things that certainly raise our eyebrows, of course. As I mentioned, the exclusion from the Corporations Information Act and the fact that agents can be paid even before the fund is set up are concerns. Then, of course, there's the Trillium Trust Act. This is schedule 44. The Trillium Trust Act excludes Hydro One and its subsidiaries. If Hydro One sells a qualifying asset, the proceeds do not have to be transferred to the Consolidated Revenue Fund to then be paid to the Trillium Trust. There's no guarantee that this money is actually going to get into the Trillium Trust. They have not guaranteed that that is going to happen.

1700

There is no provision in Bill 91 prescribing Hydro One's shares as qualifying assets. Bill 91 does not require that Hydro One proceeds, or any revenue from the asset optimization program, go into the Trillium Trust. As I mentioned, once this bill gets royal assent, there are new rules of engagement that are put into place.

There are a couple of other issues under the Taxation Act that I have to raise today, Mr. Speaker, because I think they caught several of our key stakeholders by surprise—I mentioned this last week, when I was talking about the budget motion.

The tax credits that are being changed, in particular for the Ontario film industry, have truly sent a shock wave through the entertainment industry here in Toronto. You have to understand that some of these productions are mid-phase. They have already set up, they have already booked their sites, they have already hired a huge number

of people with varying skill sets, all the way up and down. I think that people don't even understand how complex these industries are.

When they found out that there's a reduction in the tax credits, it totally blindsided this industry. They have said on various occasions that this is the difference between picking up productions and moving. They can do that quite easily, especially if they can make the financial case for it, because they had no idea that these tax credits were going to be altered in such a drastic way.

The other issue that I think caught all of us by surprise—we heard pre-budget that there were going to be some great incentives around apprenticeships. There's \$23 million listed in the budget for apprenticeships this year. However, Mr. Speaker, they're reducing the tax credit for the industry. So you're encouraging people to enter into apprenticeship opportunities, but then you're shutting the door on their opportunity to actually access that information. It makes so little sense. It's a little bit like—it's contradictory. I was trying to think of that Kris Kristofferson song about a walking contradiction. That's what has been running in my mind.

We've heard definitions of what "progressive" is. We certainly heard a lot about progressive budgets during the election. There isn't anything progressive about this budget, Mr. Speaker, when the entire premise is short-term, poorly-thought-out financial decisions that have a negative impact on future generations. I have to say that it's disappointing, because there are smart places to invest.

Certainly, education is one of the ways. That's how I got involved in politics. For me, public education is always worth fighting for, and there have been some big fights on education in the history of this province. I think that people feel strongly about it; they're very passionate about it. I think there's going to be a lot of people on the front lawn tomorrow who have something to say about the new physical and health curriculum. It does drum up a very emotional response, right?

I'm partly here today because of when this government brought in Bill 115 and squashed collective bargaining rights for teachers in the province of Ontario. I think it's safe to say that even though they brought in Bill 122 to sort of mitigate some of the negativity of Bill 115, there's definitely a Bill 115 hangover in the province of Ontario right now, and you're seeing it play itself out. Those local bargaining conversations are so frustrating, because there's a definite lack of leadership at the provincial level. That has always been a challenge for school boards, especially with the centralized power around education that the Liberals have embraced here at Queen's Park. Although they say they respect school boards, sometimes it's pretty hard to see that respect play itself out.

When you look at the overall budget, there are little bits and pieces—really small pieces that work towards making some stakeholders happy and then there are these big, poorly-thought-out policies, as I said, though, on the employment side of the revenue stream, which is really

missing. That's why the tax credit reduction, the Apprenticeship Tax Credit reduction and the youth employment strategy reduction of \$245 million—they're nickel-and-diming these industries, who actually have a very strong record of creating jobs in the province, particularly the Ontario film industry for Toronto.

On the employment stats, there were 27,500 full-time jobs lost last month. In total, there have been 317,500 manufacturing jobs lost since 2000. The government has admitted that they overestimated job creation in budget 2014 by 67,000 jobs, so you have to go back and look at the math on that. What is happening? Why were those jobs not created? Ironically, you have to go back to the cost of energy, which is again—you go full circle. Selling off Hydro One makes no sense.

If you gather up all of the cuts to the other programs—and I think it actually was the speaker last year who pointed out the fact that, on page 244 of last year's budget, there were 6% cuts in every ministry except for education, health care, justice and community and social services, and yet this government found a way to go through the back door and reduce expenditures in those ministries.

In the ministries where we know that smart investment actually would save money, like in workplace health and safety, for instance, we saw a 6% cut in the six agencies that are charged with training, protecting and ensuring that people, for instance, have their qualifications on working at heights training so that injuries are avoided. That's a smart place to invest. It's prevention; it's intervention.

There's nothing in this budget, for instance, on conservation. If you want to actually create jobs, you should have a renovation tax credit, which inspires local—which is very—what's the word I'm looking for? It inspires local investment in the local economy, so it gets those local tradespeople working in homes. People are inspired to actually invest in the local economy by updating their own homes or businesses to make—

Ms. Cindy Forster: And hiring some apprentices.

Ms. Catherine Fife: Actually yes, hiring some apprentices instead of pulling out the tax credit. It has the added effect of pushing that underground economy up into the light. The benefit about that is that consumers are better protected and the government gets the revenue. It's a win-win-win-win. It's completely the opposite thinking that surrounds the idea of selling off Hydro One.

The \$3.2-billion cuts to other programs which are predicted to happen over the next three years: These are going to be devastating cuts. When you're holding the line, for instance, on the hospital budget and those costs at that hospital continue to rise, you have to admit that that actually is a cut. Because community supports have also been whittled away, the not-for-profit organizations which are really just holding the line on the social fabric or the social net that we have championed for so many years and that I think perhaps inspired a lot of us to get involved in politics—that net is frayed. It is seriously frayed. Those not-for-profit agencies have seen their

operating grants reduced. They've, of course, had to invest in proving to the government that they're helping people.

1710

Really, you can see in all of our communities across this province especially the lack of strategy around seniors, and I think a colleague mentioned it. Not having a comprehensive strategy around dementia and aging by not investing in some known policies and programs that have proven to make a difference—and we have that evidence. We should have, because it's 2015, and the tsunami of aging Ontarians is here. We don't have to talk about it coming anymore; it's actually happening in our communities. If you actually had those investments in place in your communities, then they wouldn't have to go to the emergency room. So there's a very compelling economic argument for strategic investment, which is actually more compassionate and is obviously in keeping with why a lot of us are here.

But when you look at the cuts, budget 2012 had \$1.6 billion; budget 2013, \$2.14 billion; budget 2014, \$1.58 billion; budget 2015, \$1.94 billion. The reason I raise these cuts is that, in total, that's \$5.8 billion. So the Liberals are really beating Mr. Harper on the cuts by a million cuts—\$5.8 billion in cuts.

Interjection: Oh, come on.

Ms. Catherine Fife: I know you really don't like it when I mention Stephen Harper, but I don't think that they like it either.

The point is that you don't cut your way back to prosperity. It doesn't work. Other jurisdictions have tried it, and it has not worked. Cutting almost \$90 million in successful tax credits for the cultural industries, cutting \$95 million from tax credits to support apprenticeships: This is not good news for the economy. It really isn't.

Certainly, as I mentioned, there's the hospital funding. This is the fourth straight year. Hospitals come here and they lobby—the presidents, the managers, the LHINs, the CCACs. I mean, really, when you look at the entire health care portfolio, it's a challenge to see how we're going to take care of the people in this province. It's not sustainable. I'm actually at a loss of words.

Ms. Cindy Forster: Sixteen hundred people not getting their care in Niagara because of the strike, because of the for-profit.

Ms. Catherine Fife: People are out on strike. They're just fighting for, like, a 1% increase because they've been frozen for four years. Yet you see these public sector CEO salaries continue to go up, unabated.

It really does come down to two priorities, I think, for us in the province of Ontario. As mentioned, there's Ontario's Youth Jobs Strategy, which we fought for in the minority government, which I look back to with great fondness. I really did enjoy actually being part of a minority government. I know the government didn't like it that much, but we were able to bring some really creative ideas to the budget process. I know the PCs decided just to sit out the entire event for various budgets—

Interjections.

Ms. Catherine Fife: There seems to be a lot going on here, Mr. Speaker.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I can't hear the member for Kitchener–Waterloo, and I need to be able to hear the member for Kitchener–Waterloo. I would ask the members who are engaged in private conversations to reduce the noise level so that we can all hear each other.

Ms. Catherine Fife: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. That's very kind of you.

So here we are, and it all comes back to where this government is acting on priorities. Their priorities very clearly are keeping certain stakeholders very happy, which is why I think they are selling Hydro One, because everybody in this House understands that, from a financial perspective, it is actually not making sense. It is hard to imagine, really, especially after attending this P3 session earlier today with my colleagues, how the \$130 billion is actually going to be sustainable, because when you sell off Hydro One for a quick cash grab, you're actually shutting down a major revenue stream for future infrastructure and transit investment. That is a fact.

Ultimately, we clearly see on this side of the House that the people of this province are going to pay the price for those decisions. This came up in the P3 panel earlier this morning, that there are few files that are more political than transportation. I think we all have examples of that. Certainly, decisions and promises are sort of moving targets in this province, I'd have to say.

Selling off Hydro One for \$4 billion, which would only pay for half of the Toronto relief line, is incredibly short-sighted. Losing \$800 million a year in annual revenue is like burning the furniture to heat the house. It doesn't make any sense, and certainly we should know better from the past.

When I think of what we've gone through in Kitchener–Waterloo over the years—this budget actually has Highway 7 in it. It's the eighth year in a row that Highway 7 has been listed as an upcoming project.

Hon. Steven Del Duca: Starting construction this year.

Ms. Catherine Fife: It's better late than never. It is true that it's coming.

Then, of course, there was the LRT. The LRT construction is starting in Waterloo, as well. It was originally promised that the government was going to pay for \$600 million of that, and then they cut that in half to \$300 million, which really poisoned the whole energy around the LRT.

Then, of course, there's the two-way, all-day GO. This community was promised two-way, all-day GO service every 15 minutes. Now we have the promise of peak service, peak time, which never takes into account the fact that 10,000 people commute from Toronto to Kitchener–Waterloo. Waterloo region is a major economic engine for this province. That would be a smart investment. The municipality of Kitchener and the municipality of Waterloo, Communitech and the entire business com-

munity have rallied behind this investment, which you, in turn, turned your back on, which is really unfortunate, because it compromises confidence in all politicians. What an unfortunate thing to happen.

We were also promised electrified rail, and we were also promised high-speed rail. We were even promised a bullet train within five years for \$500 million. That was your predecessor; I'll give you credit for that. So far we haven't heard any bullets coming from you right now, but we have seen some major backtracking on promises on this issue.

To summarize, as I said, this budget does not address the needed revenue streams that this province relies on to invest in infrastructure. It does not address some of the social crises that we are seeing in all of our communities around aging in place with dignity, around hospital budgets that, quite honestly, have been frozen now for the fourth year in a row. People are paying the price.

To top it all off, we have the sale of a strategic public asset, Hydro One, which has proven to be—it's part of our history, it's part of our heritage as a province that it has provided reliable hydro. We have some control over those rates, because profit is not driving the agenda, and we have a reliable revenue stream that actually comes from that asset.

So we obviously cannot support this budget, just like last year we couldn't support an austerity budget—6% cuts in every ministry. If you think that people are not hurting in this province, I have to tell you that you really do have your heads in the sand, which is most unfortunate.

If you do the math on selling Hydro One, it doesn't add up.

Hon. Steven Del Duca: It's a good thing I have no hair.

Ms. Catherine Fife: Well, I'm not going to talk about the hair of the Minister of Transportation.

What I am going to say is that in year one of a four-year mandate, this government had the opportunity to be courageous and to set this province back to an idea of shared prosperity. By selling off a major strategic asset like Hydro One, you are essentially just throwing your hands up in the air, and I tell you, that does not instill confidence in the people of this province, from an economic perspective and from a social justice perspective, because the poverty rates that this government has been promising to address continue to increase, with no strategic plan around affordable housing and with no strategic plan to make public transit more affordable. It's really a missed opportunity, and I think that the people of this province deserve better.

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The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions or comments? The member for Beaches–East York.

Interjections.

Mr. Arthur Potts: Thank you, Speaker; thank you, members.

Thank you to the member from Kitchener–Waterloo. I would like to start by saying that we appreciate very much

her capacity to come out here and speak for an hour as a lead on behalf of her party. I know her remarks are very well reasoned. They're very well meaning, but let's be frank; let's be clear: They're very wrong.

I want to focus on three things she said. She spoke at length about the Hydro One sale, so I'd like to address my comments to her comments there, particularly her comment to "follow the money." If you follow the money, this is the right deal to do. An \$800-million recurring revenue stream is what makes this an asset to sell. Based on a \$15-billion evaluation, that's about a 5.3% return. As she has acknowledged, the bond rates are down to less than 2%. So at 5.3%, if we sell 60%, that's a \$9-billion—not \$4 billion, as she mentioned—increase in our capacity. What if the markets were actually prepared to take a 4% return on this money? A 4% return would value the company at \$20 billion, and at 60% that would be \$12 billion in our coffers—\$5 billion towards the debt and an additional \$7 billion towards building infrastructure, which is so important to this province.

She also talked about, "It's a fact that rates will go up." Had she done her due diligence on how the OEB works, she would know that you cannot use capital expenditures as a justification for a rate increase. The money that was spent to acquire these shares cannot be used as part of a rate increase. The way that the private sector makes money as a return on their investment is by efficiencies, by going through and doing innovation and finding new ways of doing it.

Finally, if anyone holding shares should operate in such a fashion that they exercise more than 10% control, subsection 48.2(1) ensures that Hydro takes steps to remove any kind of such collusion. Ten per cent is the maximum, and we stand by it.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Toby Barrett: The member from Kitchener–Waterloo covered a broad range of issues on this budget we're debating and focused on the privatization of Hydro One. We've heard some very good presentations from the third party and from the opposition.

Again, much of the focus is on choices with respect to Hydro One, choices with respect to this \$27-billion debt. It's a debt that's supposed to be paid off by the money Hydro One would make by selling it off. Again, the question is: Now that this money, 60% of it, will go to the sell-off, in my view the debt will increase, the debt will balloon, and so will the price of electricity for homeowners, for businesses and for industry. Industry has choices in the province of Ontario and other states like North Carolina and Ohio.

The fact remains that electricity prices to date have tripled. The top-end price has tripled. Under this Liberal government, when they came in, the rate was 4.3 cents a kilowatt hour. Business knows this. I don't think we're going to see any alleviation of rates under this majority sale. This budget does not guarantee any savings in electricity. They've removed the oversight. It's surprising that, so recently after those Ornge hearings, they would

remove oversight over a major agency like Hydro One—and Ombudsman oversight and oversight by the Auditor General. And they have removed that public oversight with respect to the sunshine list.

In contrast to what was said, there are some cases for privatization and there are some good reasons to do that, but not just to get some money for this government to bail out their wasteful spending.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Ms. Cindy Forster: I want to first thank Catherine. It's a hard slog to do an hour on a bill the second time around, right?

Mr. Percy Hatfield: The member from Kitchener–Waterloo.

Ms. Cindy Forster: Kitchener–Waterloo, yes. But she did a great job.

I don't care what you call it. Whether you want to call it modernization, whether you want to call it realizing our assets, whatever it is, at the end of the day, it is a sell-off.

I want to take it right down to the little guy's level. I come from a community where we've lost 10,000 manufacturing jobs over the last 15 years. I've got a story here, a newspaper article from last week, from the owner of a little restaurant in Welland, 60 years in business, the Blue Star Restaurant: Bryan Moreau. He was asked to talk about selling off Hydro and what that was going to mean for him.

A 2% hike already, without selling off Hydro, is going to increase his bill, which is already \$4,000 a month for a restaurant. Add \$4,000 a month for heat and add another \$2,000 for water, and he's at \$10,000 before he even opens his doors.

He said, "You know what? I can't tell people, 'I'm going to cook your chicken in off-peak hours,' because my business operates from 7 in the morning until 7 o'clock at night. Off-peak starts at 7. So now you're telling me that I'm actually going to pay two cents more a kilowatt hour now, and once you privatize, I'm going to pay a lot more than that."

What we're doing here is increasing hydro rates and unreliability for customers. You're going to put a lot of small businesses like the Blue Star Restaurant out of business at the end of the day. We've already driven manufacturing across the border to New York state, where they have very low hydro rates and very low tax rates as incentives.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Hon. Steven Del Duca: As always, it's a pleasure to have the opportunity to respond to some of the convenient mythology that's being spun by members of the NDP caucus.

What I find most remarkable about this is that this particular member—and I recognize she has the last word, at least at this particular stage—has stood in this House, both on debate on this particular budget bill and also over the last number of months, and she has railed, for example, about Infrastructure Ontario's approach to

making sure they partner with us and they partner with the private sector to build the province of Ontario up. She has gotten up repeatedly, including this afternoon, and talked about whether or not there will in fact be additional infrastructure projects supporting the region of Kitchener-Waterloo.

Of course, as I said as I was walking informally from my seat to the lobby as she was speaking earlier today, Highway 7 from Guelph to Kitchener will be under construction later this year. There are significant examples of the infrastructure investments that we keep making. The Minister of Education, representing the community of Guelph, actually went on at length this afternoon with respect to some of the other positive news that's coming for that particular region.

One of the things I'm really struck by is that, time and time again here in this chamber, I've heard that member and other members of the NDP rail, again, about Infrastructure Ontario and the alternate financing and procurement model that we've used over the last decade and beyond to build hospitals and courthouses and so much other transit and transportation infrastructure.

What is remarkable about that, Speaker, is that currently, in her own home community, in Kitchener-Waterloo, there is an LRT that is being built with provincial support of up to \$300 million for phase 1. That particular project, as per the direction from Waterloo regional council, is a contract that is what we call a "design, build, finance, operate and maintain" agreement, including private sector partners like Aecon and Meridian and Kiewit and others. What is most remarkable is not that the private sector is partnering with her home community. It's that she had the temerity to show up for the groundbreaking, for the photo op, yet she's here in this House suggesting that our government doesn't do this right. Shame on her, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): The member for Kitchener-Waterloo now has the opportunity to respond.

Ms. Catherine Fife: Boy, the Kool-Aid must be pretty strong over there, I tell you, because honestly, Mr. Speaker—I just want to thank, though, the members from Welland, Haldimand-Norfolk and Beaches-East York, and the minister.

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I can be respectful of the opinions that come out in this place, but the promises that have been made to people around this province on transportation, honestly, would make your head spin. They are a moving target. So I can see why the Minister of Transportation is so sensitive about these, because now those promises are very much connected to the federal election. It always does surprise me when that particular minister stands up and brags about investing \$300 million in our LRT. The original promise was \$600 million. He's basically bragging about coming to the table with half of the money, which is really investment—when I first ran back in 2007, that's when Highway 7 was first announced. They broke ground. The next year they cut the ribbon, and then

they broke ground again in 2008. Then they cut another ribbon in 2010. There were lots of ribbons and lots of dirt flying all over the place. It's good to see that it's actually coming through.

I tell you, I will show up. I will always show up and make sure that the people are actually getting what they were promised in the first place, and making sure that when that LRT is finally completed, they are going to find out what they're going to get for that extra \$49 million, which came with the AFP in that region.

You've got a tough job, I understand that, but the Kool-Aid is going to have to end, I think.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: I will be sharing my time with the Minister of Transportation and the great member from Kingston and the Islands.

I am happy to have the opportunity to speak about the budget bill today. If I may, I want to talk about why I am proud of this budget bill. This is a budget that is for the people of this province for now and for the future. This is a budget that responds to the current and future needs, based on our consultations.

Le budget présenté par notre gouvernement cette année investit dans les Ontariens et les Ontariennes. À travers un plan solide pour édifier notre infrastructure sur les 10 prochaines années, nous attirerons plus de commerces ici en Ontario. Ce faisant, nous créerons plus d'emplois et ferons croître l'économie. C'est aussi un budget qui illustre bien notre position comme gouvernement sur plusieurs points. Il démontre notre engagement envers nos jeunes, envers le marché du travail, envers nos citoyens les plus vulnérables, envers l'environnement et bien plus.

Ce budget est bien plus qu'un simple compte rendu économique de la province. C'est notre engagement envers tous les Ontariens et Ontariennes, afin d'améliorer la qualité de vie dont ils bénéficient, sans oublier les générations futures. C'est un plan d'avenir audacieux qui prend le leadership sur plusieurs enjeux difficiles, tout en prenant soin des Ontariens et Ontariennes les plus vulnérables.

Ce budget est le premier pas vers un brillant avenir où l'Ontario pourra se vanter d'être le chef de file dans l'économie moderne grâce à des investissements historiques. C'est un budget dont je suis fière, aussi, car pour la deuxième année consécutive, il y a une reconnaissance directe du rôle important joué par les Franco-Ontariens et Franco-Ontariennes dans notre belle province. En reconnaissant le 400^e anniversaire de la présence française en Ontario et en allouant 5,9 millions de dollars pour célébrer ce moment historique, notre gouvernement continue dans sa longue tradition de soutenir l'épanouissement de la communauté francophone de l'Ontario.

Whether I worked as a nurse, a lawyer, a municipal councillor and as an MPP, I always have the same goal: Work together to make Ontario the best place to live for every Ontarian, from childhood to retirement. This budget

is another step towards this goal, and I am very proud of that. Some may have doubts and say that this goal is too big to reach, but I don't think so. I believe our only true strength as a province is our people, and if we invest in people, make sure they have the right opportunities and try to remove as many obstacles as possible out of their way, I know Ontarians will continue to be the driving force behind Ontario's greatness.

I heard speakers from the two opposition parties talking about Hydro One. Listening to them, we don't have the mandate to sell a part of it; we don't have the mandate to privatize part of it. But out there in the community, they're very interested. This weekend, I kept responding to phone calls from people in my community who wanted to invest in Hydro One. They want to be part of it. They want to invest in it. They want to see how they will be able to share the ownership with this government.

We need infrastructure. We need to build infrastructure, and we believe in it. That's why we have announced \$130 billion for the next 10 years. We would have liked to have a partner working with us. We would have liked to have the federal government working with us, but do you know what they did? They announced in their budget—they're balancing their budget on the back of Ontario—\$720 million for the whole of Canada, starting in 2017. Imagine how good that will be to build Ontario and build the rest of Canada.

The Canadian association of municipalities has said very loud and clear that we have a deficit in infrastructure and we need to rebuild infrastructure, and in order to do that, we need partners at the table. I hope that the MPPs on the other side will give a call to their counterparts at the federal level and make sure that they do invest in infrastructure. Investing in infrastructure has no political colour—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): We've been trying to enforce a higher standard of decorum this afternoon, so I would ask all members of the House to come to order.

I return to the Attorney General. She has the floor.

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: Thank you very much, Speaker. When you look at other provinces or other large cities—the time is up? Oh, sorry. I have so much to say. I'll stop here, and I hope I will have a chance to speak about the need for infrastructure in Ontario. Mr. Speaker, I'll turn it over to you.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I recognize the Minister of Transportation.

Hon. Steven Del Duca: I hesitate to intervene in the very eloquent remarks of my colleague the Attorney General. It's always a joy to listen to her provide her commentary and her insight with respect to such an important matter. Of course, we'll be sharing our time with our colleague from Kingston and the Islands momentarily.

As always, I sincerely enjoy the spirited and passionate debate that takes place in this Legislature, particularly around items like budgets. As many will know or remem-

ber, I did have the opportunity to serve for a couple of budgets—budget 2013 and the first version of budget 2014—as the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Finance, our current Minister of Finance. If there's one theme I have seen first-hand as the PA at finance and now in my time as Minister of Transportation, it is that we have a consistent and concerted plan to make sure we are building the province up. You see that right in the title of the bill itself: Building Ontario Up Act. It speaks to all that is the very best of what is included in this year's budget and this year's road map for making sure that we move the province forward.

I have stood in this place and had the opportunity to talk many, many times, thinking at a global or macro level, about what these investments in infrastructure mean for the province. I could go through this list, and I may just take the opportunity to mention a few things, because they are certainly important. But then I want to try, with my time, to bring it back to what is important to me locally, not as the Minister of Transportation but, in this case, serving proudly as the MPP representing the community of Vaughan.

In this budget book, opposition members and those watching at home will find a multitude of clear examples of projects in the infrastructure realm that support health care through hospital construction and renewal. They will find support for crucial infrastructure, again, in the post-secondary world.

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They will certainly, in my own portfolio, find support for a number of important highway projects. I know we had the chance this afternoon, both myself, the member from Kitchener–Waterloo and others, to add spirited debate to this notion of how important it is to proceed with the widening of Highway 7 from Kitchener to Guelph or from Guelph to Kitchener, Highways 11 and 17 from Thunder Bay to Nipigon, Highway 401 improvements in the London area, Highway 417 in the Ottawa area—this list does go on.

I heard a discussion earlier—I didn't have the chance in my two-minute response to talk about high-speed rail. Last November—I believe it was November—I had the privilege of being in London, a wonderful community so ably represented here in this Legislature by our Deputy Premier. I had the opportunity to be there to launch the environmental assessment for high-speed rail, which is a project that, when complete, will link, via high-speed rail, Toronto, Kitchener, Waterloo, London and Windsor. That's an EA project that's now under way. The Ministry of Transportation is leading that, and that work will take place over the next few years.

Of course, again in this budget book we see an ongoing commitment to our support, provincially, for dealing with the expansion of Maley Drive in Sudbury. We see the \$1-billion commitment that we have consistently put forward to support all of the economic development and job growth potential for the Ring of Fire.

And, of course, not that many days ago I had the opportunity to be in Sault Ste. Marie, standing alongside the

Minister of Government and Consumer Services and the Minister of Northern Development and Mines, to announce that because of this Premier—our Premier's vision and her ambitious plan to build the province up through the Moving Ontario Forward plan, that \$31.5 billion that we will invest over the next decade—we were able to reinstate a stand-alone Connecting Links program. Starting with funding in 2016, once we have completed the design of the program, working with our municipal partners, we will be able to support nearly 80 communities—about 350 kilometres of Connecting Links roads that exist here in province of Ontario. Again, that's because of the commitment that this Premier has to making sure that all of Ontario benefits fully from that \$31.5 billion.

Of course, you will all know that I talk proudly, and I think rightly so, about all of our transit investments that we see not only in the greater Toronto and Hamilton area—though there are many that will help fulfill some of those transit ambitions that we have in this region, to make sure that we continue to successfully fight gridlock—but also to see our support for phase 1 of the Ottawa LRT. A phenomenal day not that many weeks ago, or a couple of months ago, when I was in Ottawa with all of our Ottawa colleagues to see what we called the unveiling of the mock-up for that LRT with Mayor Watson and so many other people—such an exciting day for Ottawa. And because of our commitment, along with the municipal and federal government, we are moving that project ahead.

We were at the table—in fact, I believe we were first to the table for the funding for phase 1 of the Ottawa LRT, and we will be back at the table, as a result of Moving Ontario Forward, for phase 2, a commitment that was a little bit fuzzy or unclear during last year's election campaign from Tim Hudak and the Conservatives.

Of course, Kitchener–Waterloo: I've already talked a little bit today about ION, phase 1, an AFP project with support from the private sector, helping us build out that crucial infrastructure. We were there at the table for the funding and the construction of phase 1, and again because of Moving Ontario Forward, because of our Premier's vision, plan and ambition for this province, we'll be there for phase 2, potential support for a BRT in London and so much more.

Not that many weeks ago, I was in Durham, and then again in a more easterly part of Durham, at the edge of the wonderful community of Peterborough, to announce the \$1.2-billion contract being awarded for phase 2 of Highway 407 East, a significant project that will help unlock so much economic development potential throughout Durham and leading into communities like Haliburton, Kawartha, Peterborough, Lindsay and so many others.

In fact, phase 1 of Highway 407 East will actually come into service later this year. By the end of this year, cars will be driving on Highway 407 East, phase 1, and the West Durham Link, or I believe Highway 412 is the

accurate number. So, an exciting time for that particular part of our region.

I'll say very quickly as well a number of transit projects that we've been able to announce in the last couple of weeks: the Finch LRT here in the 416, a \$1.2-billion LRT—much talked about over a number of years. We are proceeding with construction, which will start next year. Of course, I had the real honour to be in Etobicoke North, at Humber College, to announce that particular project with my colleague from Etobicoke North, my colleague the minister responsible for seniors' affairs. But importantly, when you think about that \$1.2-billion LRT, that is a transit project that will unite, will connect two post-secondary institutions: Humber College at the west end, and it will arrive right at the edge of York University. Importantly, it will run through two what we call priority neighbourhoods. I mentioned that day that as Metrolinx proceeds with that \$1.2-billion LRT, there will be a community benefits plan put in place to make sure that we help spur economic activity in those two communities.

The week before in Peel region, \$1.6 billion for the Hurontario–Main LRT: That's 22 kilometres of rapid transit that will be flowing north-south in that community, connecting people in Brampton and Mississauga to GO regional express rail, something that I know Mayors Jeffrey and Crombie were delighted to hear about.

Speaker, I mentioned GO RER a second ago. Let me just say, the week before the Hurontario–Main LRT, to be standing alongside our Premier and the MPP for Barrie to announce the very ambitious, very exciting and transformative GO regional express rail plan—\$13.5 billion over 10 years, positively impacting every single one of our seven GO corridors.

We will have a frequent, rapid and ready regional service along all of our corridors—hundreds of new trips on each corridor over the next five years. Over that next decade, on a number of our corridors, fully electrified two-way, all-day GO service at up to 15-minute intervals, including—and this is important; it's important for the member from York South–Weston and the member from Davenport, the member from Trinity–Spadina and so many others, including the member from Etobicoke North—the Union Pearson Express. A number of us had the opportunity to be on that train to see what it looked like and felt like first-hand not that many days ago.

After many years of planning and many years, again, of involving the private sector to build the western spur for the Union Pearson Express, starting this June 6, well in time for the Pan/Parapan Am Games, as we committed, that Union Pearson Express will come into service.

Speaker, I mentioned all of these projects. I'm not going to get the chance to talk specifically about my community, but this is why it's so important to support our plan, to support our Premier, to support our government, but most importantly to support this province. Thank you very much.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): The member for Kingston and the Islands.

Ms. Sophie Kiwala: Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to rise today to speak in support of Bill 91. I will endeavour to keep my comments positive and stay out of the convenient mythology territory.

I am impressed with the bill and the measured and pragmatic big-picture approach that it takes to securing the long-term sustainability of our economy while maintaining and improving the quality of vital public services that we all rely on.

As a former small business owner, and after listening to constituents' concerns every day for seven years in our federal constituency office, I understand the crucial importance of continuing to support innovation, progress and a dynamic business climate in this province.

This is why I'm very encouraged by the bill's new initiative to help Ontario start-ups expand to the next level and the increased funding commitment to the Jobs and Prosperity Fund. This fund will improve productivity, competitiveness and access to global markets. It will also encourage strategic partnerships and empower the next-generation industries.

We all know that despite the side of the House that we speak from, no economy, no government can generate growth without investing in infrastructure. I therefore applaud the bill's unprecedented \$130-billion commitment to renewing and expanding public infrastructure and transportation over the next 10 years.

I'm referring to the new roads, bridges and transit that will link communities and move goods and people around this province faster and more efficiently. It's well known that congestion and pollution cost the economy billions of dollars directly and indirectly. These investments are absolutely essential to the long-term growth and sustainability of our economy, and they benefit all of us. I support that vision.

During my pre-budget-tele-town hall consultation, members of my community identified more jobs for young people as one of their top priorities. Through Bill 91, we are increasing incentives for businesses to train and employ young Ontarians. Through Ontario's Youth Jobs Strategy, through trade apprenticeship and entrepreneurship opportunities, we are helping to connect more youth to the job market after they graduate, and we're mentoring and inspiring Ontario's next generation of leaders.

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The many post-secondary students in my riding, at Queen's, St. Lawrence College and Royal Military College, have been pleased to learn that if this bill passes, their OSAP loan limits will be higher and a vehicle and part-time work will be exempted from their assessment.

Kingston and the Islands' mix of leading health care facilities, such as Kingston General Hospital, Providence Care and Hotel Dieu Hospital, excellent social services and stunning geography has made it one of Canada's destinations of choice for retirees. So I was delighted by the increased funding for seniors.

I am also delighted about the maintenance and increase to the Seniors Community Grant Program. This

great program encourages inclusion, health education, volunteering and community engagement of our seniors. I would strongly recommend all members from all sides of this House to apply for that fund and make sure that you serve your seniors in the best way that you can.

Increasing customer convenience and choice on how beer is sold in Ontario is also extremely important for smaller craft brewers across the province. It's also a step in the right direction.

Mr. Speaker, these are a few examples of how Bill 91 will benefit the people of Ontario. Therefore, I give my support to Bill 91.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: I listened with interest to the comments from different speakers on the government side, and I'm certainly glad that they're not teaching my grandchildren their kind of math in school, because they'd never pass.

They should start listening to stakeholders in this province who have criticized what they are doing. One happens to be the Canadian Manufacturers and Exporters. These are their comments on the carbon tax: "Ontario cannot afford to drive investment elsewhere. If the province implements a carbon tax we will lose high-paying jobs and manufacturing investment."

Again, I can understand that this government does not want to listen to stakeholders in making their decisions. I refer back to the Attorney General when she won't listen to stakeholders on joint and several liability. So I can understand why they do this.

The Canadian Federation of Independent Business has come out strongly against the proposed pension tax, stating that 86% of small business owners surveyed did not support the plan. Again, they won't listen.

The Ontario Chamber of Commerce also says that 26% of businesses believe that they may be able to handle the pension tax and 44% of businesses indicate they would reduce their current payroll or hire fewer employees.

This budget, in the next few years, is going to strap our descendants, our grandchildren, with \$23,000 in tax burden. That's terrible. You really should apologize for those types of policies because you're putting this debt on the backs of our descendants, and this is certainly not fair at all.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): The member for Kitchener-Waterloo.

Ms. Catherine Fife: It's interesting: I said earlier that there was some Kool-Aid over there, but there might be something stronger in that Kool-Aid—after listening to the Minister of Transportation.

The government's decision to delay, yet again, the construction of the Sheppard East LRT will mean that there will be no transit relief for the people in Scarborough or—

Mr. Arthur Potts: Point of order—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Are you in your seat?

Mr. Arthur Potts: Shit.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): First of all, you have to be in your seat to do a point of order.

Point of order, the member for Beaches–East York.

Mr. Arthur Potts: I believe the member is reading from an electronic device, which is not allowed by the rules of the House.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Anything else to add?

Mr. Arthur Potts: I do withdraw my comment. I apologize.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): The member is quite correct. It has been the ruling of the Speaker that we not read from electronic devices while we're speaking in the House.

The member for Kitchener–Waterloo has the floor still. I'll give her a little more time to conclude.

Ms. Catherine Fife: To listen to the Minister of Transportation talk about all of these promises in the face of a major backtrack on the Scarborough LRT flies in the face of everything that they've been saying. I just want to say that the people of Kitchener–Waterloo know the truth. They're living it every day on that GO train. They know the difference between five years and 10 years. They know the difference between two-way, all-day, every 15 minutes and peak service/peak direction. And they know the difference between an electrified train and a diesel train.

People can say what they're going to say in this House, but it's when the rubber hits the road or when the rails hit the rails that actually makes the difference. In this budget, this government is bragging about saving \$1.4 billion by not following through on promises. It's shameful.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments.

Mr. Shafiq Qadri: I think it is clear—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Your electronic device—

Mr. Shafiq Qadri: I'm not looking at it, Speaker. In fact, I'm allowing you to look at it.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I'm asking you to set it down, please. Thank you.

Mr. Shafiq Qadri: I think it's clear, Speaker, that when the government of Ontario needs to make the trains run on time, we turn to Il Duce, Steven Del Duca, the Minister of Transportation and the MPP for Vaughan. I would personally like to thank Minister Del Duca for coming to my own riding of Etobicoke North and announcing the \$1.2-billion Finch LRT. I can tell him on behalf of my own residents that that truly will be change-inducing and transformative.

We have eight stops right in my own riding: Humber College, Highway 27, Westmore, Martin Grove, Albion, Stevenson, Kipling and Islington.

If that were not enough, we were joined by the then-praising John Tory, Councillor Joshua Colle and President Chris Whitaker of Humber College, who were all obviously delighted with this expansion.

If that in itself were not enough, I had the privilege of riding not only with the Minister of Transportation but also with the honourable Premier of this province, to whom I am the parliamentary assistant, on the Union Pearson Express, which, of course, also cuts through the heart of my riding.

I thank the visionary leaders on this side, whether it's the bureaucrats, the political staff or the ministerial staff. And, of course, it's ultimately empowered and given direction to by the Premier. This is going to change our province and certainly my own riding of Etobicoke North. That, I think, is something to celebrate.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments.

Mr. Steve Clark: I'm pleased to provide a couple of minutes of questions and comments.

I found the statements of the three government speakers to be quite in contrast. You had the two ministers who became, as they can be, quite partisan from time to time, yet you had the member for Kingston and the Islands; she's my neighbour. I found that she provided sort of a unique perspective. Let's face it, Speaker: We've had a fairly partisan afternoon between the three parties. We took our shots at each other. And then you had my neighbour Ms. Kiwala from Kingston and the Islands keep it positive and classy. I just wanted to give her that shout-out.

Applause.

Mr. Steve Clark: There you go. That's right. One of the things that she mentioned was post-secondary education. I know that she and I both share a campus of St. Lawrence College. I had the opportunity to go to the last community council meeting for the Brockville campus and really got a great overview of the good things that are happening at that campus.

But I am worried, Speaker. I am worried about this budget and the direction it's taking. Certainly she talked about health care. I know that the Kingston hospitals do serve part of my riding, but I do see this government's cuts to health care playing out in the hallways at the Brockville General Hospital. I've seen it last year in last year's budget with now one less post-secondary educational facility in my riding, that being the closure of Kemptville College. So while I applaud my neighbour, I can see that the regionalization of eastern Ontario has started. I'm very concerned with this eastern Ontario growth plan that's being discussed in the budget. I fear that plan will be a one-size-fits-all planning plan for our community. I happen to have faith in my local mayors and local councillors that, in a rural riding, they can make those growth decisions for my constituents. I have faith in them, and I wanted to make sure that, before the end of the day, I put that on the record, Speaker, so thank you for giving me that chance.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): That concludes our questions and comments for this round.

I return to the Minister of Transportation for his reply.

Hon. Steven Del Duca: I want to thank all four of the other speakers.

I'll begin, actually, with the final speaker, the member from Leeds-Grenville. I do appreciate him, in a very considered and thoughtful way, putting forward his comments, and also, at the outset, his comments with respect to perhaps some of that partisan jabbing that occurred here this afternoon. I hope that the member from Leeds-Grenville, who I have a great deal of regard for, will forgive me for what's about to come.

I think there's a reason that there is so much energy here this afternoon. When I listen to that member or, at least this afternoon, most of his colleagues—and I certainly have over the last number of weeks—I feel the anguish and the pain that is emanating from that particular caucus. Of course, to have to go into next weekend and choose your fourth leader in the last 12 years must be very troubling. I get that. I feel that pain.

But fundamentally, the presence of that pain and discomfort and anguish that you feel, notwithstanding all of your collective performances over the last 12 years that have been so strongly rejected by the people of Ontario, not once, not twice, not three times, but four times—that's no reason to not support this budget, because it builds your communities up, as well—

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I'd ask the member for Leeds-Grenville to come to order and stop thumping the desk.

The Minister of Transportation has 30 seconds to conclude.

Hon. Steven Del Duca: Thank you very much. I want to say to the members of the NDP that I also feel the anguish and pain that comes from that caucus because they see that after they had the opportunity last May to accept the most progressive budget put forward by the most progressive Premier in Ontario's history, they rejected it and then they were so soundly repudiated by the people of Ontario. To see these projects going forward and this province being built up must drive them deservedly crazy.

We're going to pass this budget. We're going to move the province forward.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): It being past 6 of the clock, this House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 9 a.m.

The House adjourned at 1802.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO
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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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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	
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Bisson, Gilles (NDP)	Timmins–James Bay / Timmins–Baie James	
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Clark, Steve (PC)	Leeds–Grenville	Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire de l'opposition officielle
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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
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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
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Elliott, Christine (PC)	Whitby–Oshawa	Deputy Leader, Official Opposition / Chef adjointe de l'opposition officielle
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Fife, Catherine (NDP)	Kitchener–Waterloo	

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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 Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry / Ministre des Richesses naturelles et des Forêts
Mauro, Hon. / L'hon. Bill (LIB)	Thunder Bay–Atikokan	
McDonell, Jim (PC)	Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry	
McGarry, Kathryn (LIB)	Cambridge	
McMahon, Eleanor (LIB)	Burlington	
McMeekin, Hon. / L'hon. Ted (LIB)	Ancaster–Dundas–Flamborough– Westdale	Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / Ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement
McNaughton, Monte (PC)	Lambton–Kent–Middlesex	
Meilleur, Hon. / L'hon. Madeleine (LIB)	Ottawa–Vanier	Attorney General / Procureure générale Minister Responsible for Francophone Affairs / Ministre déléguée aux Affaires francophones

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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	
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Pettapiece, Randy (PC)	Perth–Wellington	
Potts, Arthur (LIB)	Beaches–East York	
Qaadri, Shafiq (LIB)	Etobicoke North / Etobicoke-Nord	
Rinaldi, Lou (LIB)	Northumberland–Quinte West	
Sandals, Hon. / L'hon. Liz (LIB)	Guelph	Minister of Education / Ministre de l'Éducation
Sattler, Peggy (NDP)	London West / London-Ouest	
Scott, Laurie (PC)	Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock	
Sergio, Hon. / L'hon. Mario (LIB)	York West / York-Ouest	Minister Responsible for Seniors Affairs Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille
Singh, Jagmeet (NDP)	Bramalea–Gore–Malton	Deputy Leader, Recognized Party / Chef adjoint du gouvernement
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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
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Garfield Dunlop, Michael Mantha
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Soo Wong
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Lisa MacLeod, Harinder Malhi
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permanent des règlements et des projets de loi d'intérêt privé**

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Jennifer K. French, Monte Kwinter
Amrit Mangat, Kathryn McGarry
Indira Naidoo-Harris, Daiene Vernile
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Christine Elliott, Marie-France Lalonde
Amrit Mangat, Gila Martow
Kathryn McGarry, Jagmeet Singh
Peter Tabuns
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Valerie Quioc Lim

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Comité spécial de la violence et du harcèlement à caractère
sexuel**

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Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Laurie Scott
Han Dong, Randy Hillier
Marie-France Lalonde, Harinder Malhi
Kathryn McGarry, Eleanor McMahon
Taras Natyshak, Peggy Sattler
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