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Tuesday 5 May 2015

Mardi 5 mai 2015

Speaker
Honourable Dave Levac

Clerk
Deborah Deller

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
OF ONTARIO

Tuesday 5 May 2015

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE
DE L'ONTARIO

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The House met at 0900.

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

Prayers.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Orders of the day.

Interruption.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: Good morning, Speaker. Somebody is trying to get into the House—really wants to get in.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

2015 ONTARIO BUDGET

Resuming the debate adjourned on April 30, 2015, on the motion that this House approves in general the budgetary policy of the government.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): When we last debated this issue, the rotation had been completed, and it's now further debate. The member from Wellington–Halton Hills.

Mr. Ted Arnott: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. First of all, I have to apologize to you because I broke the door trying to get into the chamber so that I could take my place in the House. There's a hinge that came out of the door; it's going to have to be replaced. I know our staff were a little nervous that I wasn't in the chamber at the time of the prayers, and I apologize for that, too.

At the same time, I'm very pleased to have this opportunity to debate the budget motion that was tabled in this House shortly after the presentation of the budget. We, of course, have a nice blue copy—sorry, it's red—a red copy of the provincial budget. Building Ontario Up is what the government calls it. It was presented in the House a few days ago, as we know.

I want to begin my remarks by acknowledging an important day in the country of Holland. Today is the 70th anniversary of the liberation of Holland. As we know, Mr. Speaker, it was in part due to the sacrifice, the courage and the dedication of Canadian soldiers, who were primarily responsible for the liberation of Holland and bringing to an end the tyranny of the Nazi regime in that country during World War II. Many Canadian soldiers, believe it or not, are able to be in Holland today to mark that 70th anniversary. It may be the last time that the greatest generation will be able to be present in Holland for this commemoration. We're thinking of the Dutch people today and also the extraordinary contribution that our Dutch-Canadians have made, because there was a

huge wave of immigration to Canada after the First World War of people from Holland. They have made an immeasurable contribution to the country and to the province of Ontario, so we remember them today.

I want to begin by clarifying something that seems to be a bit misunderstood around here, even in the Legislature, perhaps in the media and perhaps amongst some in the general public. We are debating the budget motion right now. This is the motion that is tabled after the provincial budget, and it's very straightforward and simple. It's one line, really. Proposed by the government, it's suggesting that the House has confidence, in general, in the budgetary policy of the government.

We in opposition do not have confidence, in general, in the budgetary policy of the government. So it would be logical—and I know you would agree, Mr. Speaker—if we don't have confidence in the budgetary policy of the government, that we would vote against the budget motion. This is something that was somewhat distorted by Liberal strategists during the minority Parliament back in 2011. You'll recall, Mr. Speaker, that in fact the Liberal Party paid for robocalls in the ridings of Burlington and Cambridge, seats that we held with our members Jane McKenna and Rob Leone, who had been newly elected in 2011. Robocalls were paid for by the Liberal Party into those ridings, telling the people of those ridings that if their Conservative members, Rob Leone and Jane McKenna, voted against the budget motion, they were therefore voting against their hospital projects. That is a false statement, and the Liberal strategists should have known that. I believe they did know that, and yet those robocalls were made.

In my riding, there were Liberals who wrote letters to the editor—yes, that's exactly correct. In my riding, there were letters to the editor sent by Liberals suggesting that if I voted against the budget motion in 2011—after the provincial election, when we were in the minority period—I was voting against my hospital projects. Again, absolutely a false statement. What we are voting on is the budgetary policy of the government in general.

The fact is that of course the New Democrats, during the minority period, negotiated with the government, and certain things were included in the budget. For a two-year period they were prepared to, if not support the budget, at least abstain to allow the budget to pass, to prevent an election. But I would caution those members of the House—and I know there are many Liberals here who are interested in this; we all have a conscience—that it is completely false to suggest that any member is voting against a project in their riding if they vote against the

budget motion and the budgetary policy of the government.

Indeed, when the Liberal Party was in opposition, when our party was in government between 1995 and 2003, in every single case the Liberal caucus voted against the budget motion. There was no question about it. And it's logical that they did, Mr. Speaker, because in those days, they did not support the budgetary policy of the Progressive Conservative government.

I wanted to get that off my chest because it has bothered me for some time. I hope that the government members will contemplate it, and I hope that the Liberal strategists who authored that approach of doing robocalls into Conservative ridings don't ever try that again.

I want to mention the key numbers that are in this budget and compare them to last year's. The provincial deficit for 2015-16 is \$8.5 billion. This, in fact, is actually down from last year; there was a \$10.9-billion deficit last year. But you'll recall in the budget last year that they actually projected a \$12.5-billion deficit and, in turn, before the budget, acknowledged that they'd come in under that projection, at \$10.9 billion.

There's really little explanation for the difference, other than that the government patted itself on the back and said that they'd done a good job of managing the expenditures and that was what accounted for the difference.

In fact, we sometimes wonder if the government uses assumptions that create a higher deficit number than is really what they expect, and when they come in under that number they take credit for their good management as a way of distracting and diverting attention away from the fact that it is still a very sizable number.

Nevertheless, the government continues to claim and to submit to the people of Ontario that they plan to balance the budget by 2017-18. They are committed to doing this. We've been saying for the last two or three years now, as the deficit has actually gone up year over year, that it's pretty hard to believe they're going to be able to balance that budget. I will acknowledge that it is true that this year the deficit has in fact come down, and if the deficit continues to come down—say, \$2 billion to \$3 billion a year, or \$4 billion a year—we get closer, of course, to that goal of a balanced budget. But I still would question the government's commitment: when the tough decisions have to be made in the next three years, whether or not they'll be prepared to make them to actually achieve that goal of a balanced budget.

Of great concern, though, is the projected provincial net debt number, which continues to go up dramatically. This year, in the provincial budget: \$298.9 billion—almost \$299 billion; this is up from \$284.2 billion last year—gone up \$14.7 billion. The debt has gone up \$14.7 billion year over year. That means it has increased—simple math—over a billion dollars a month. The debt has gone up over this past year.

0910

Provincial government spending this year is projected to be \$131.9 billion. That's \$132 billion, rounded off.

That is up from \$129.5 billion last year—a \$2.4-billion increase year over year. Again, the government would have us believe they're holding the line on spending and being successful in that regard. In fact, their spending is going up \$2.4 billion more than last year, according to their own numbers in the provincial budget.

Another serious concern is the net debt per capita. That, of course, is the amount, in effect, that each of us owes because of years of provincial government overspending. Every man, woman and child in the province of Ontario, in effect, owes this sum of money because of years and years and years of provincial government overspending—spending beyond its means in a given year. The net debt per capita this year is now at \$21,642; last year, it was \$20,772. That means the net debt per capita has gone up \$870 just in the last year. Again, that's something that should concern us all if we care about the next generation, our children and our grandchildren. I certainly do, and I know most of us do, but unfortunately, in this budget process, it seems that that concern has been repeatedly overlooked, going back to 2003.

Another important indicator of the crushing level of debt that the province of Ontario is carrying is the debt-to-GDP ratio. That takes the total debt and compares it to the value of the goods and services that we produce in the province of Ontario. That's what the gross domestic product is: the total value of what we produce in terms of goods and services in the province of Ontario. That's an important indicator because it allows us to look at how we can serve the debt. It's our capacity to service the debt and pay down the debt, pay the interest payments, and hopefully someday get to the point of paying down the principal. That debt-to-GDP ratio now stands at 39.8%, up again from last year. It was 39.4% last year, so almost half a percentage point increase. Just to compare—again, this is getting close to 40%: Before the recession in 2008-09, that number was 26.2%. So that number has gone up dramatically as well. Again, it underscores the punishing level of debt that has been incurred in recent years.

Of course, what does that mean to people? Well, we have to service the debt; we have to make interest payments on the debt. If the provincial government is going to remain solvent and meet its obligations, its debt service payments come first. If we stop paying our debt interest, of course, we would not be able to borrow money at all and we would be in a financial crisis in the province of Ontario.

That becomes, basically—the first call in the government's finances is to pay the interest on the debt. That number, not surprisingly, continues to grow dramatically. In fact, it is now the third-largest item in the provincial budget after health and education. It's also, in recent years, the fastest-growing item in the provincial budget—something that I pointed out in question period a couple of years ago. It's now well understood that it is the fastest-growing item in the budget. It's expected and projected to go up 5.7% per year, on average, for the foreseeable future. That's a number, again, that is taken

from the budget papers. I know there are some skeptics. It's on page 281 of the budget papers. It shows that the interest on the debt is expected to grow by 5.7% for the foreseeable future as far out as 2017-18. That's as far as the graph shows.

At the same time, the government would lead us to believe that they're constraining costs in so many other areas. In fact, they are constraining health care costs, and they've seen a substantial increase in transfers from the federal government to the provincial government for health care.

Again, I'll refer to the budget papers document, where we see that the Canada Health Transfer—\$12.4 billion last year—has gone up to over \$13 billion this year. At the same time, the provincial government's expenditures on health have gone up less than that. By my math, the provincial expenditures on health care are only going up \$598 million this year, while at the same time the federal government is increasing the transfers for health by \$652 million. The federal government is giving us more for health, and the provincial government isn't even spending that increase on health. In effect, given the fact that the interest costs are going up dramatically, it's pretty logical to conclude that the money that is earmarked for health care—that the federal government is intending to give us for health care—is in fact being spent to service the debt. That's how bad it has gotten under this government.

People need to understand. These are all big numbers and it's difficult to understand them, but we have to educate ourselves in terms of financial literacy. If we don't—if all the members in this House don't understand the budgetary numbers—obviously, we've got a more serious problem, perhaps, than any of us realize.

Again, the interest payments on the debt this year are projected to be \$11.4 billion. That's up from \$10.7 billion last year—again, the fastest-growing item in the budget.

Mr. Speaker, I don't have very much time. I look at the clock and I realize the time has gone very quickly for me. But I also wanted to point out some of the economic policies that have been advocated by my colleague the member for Whitby–Oshawa, who of course is seeking the leadership of our Ontario provincial PC Party. I support her leadership bid, and I believe she is the most qualified person to be the next leader of our party and to be the Premier of Ontario.

For me, it's not all about winning elections. It's actually all about good government. I realize that we have to win elections in order to form government. I realize that winning is obviously the objective of an election campaign, and during an election campaign we work all-out towards that objective. But when the election is over, it's over, and we all have a job to do.

I think it's also true that, for the people who are involved in politics in my riding—in all parties—winning is important, but it's winning as a means to an end. Winning isn't the end in itself. Winning is the means to an end, with the end, of course, being good government. I

would add that comment to this debate too, and ask members to consider that.

Christine Elliott, in her speech at this Legislature—actually, in the wintertime—gave a very compelling plan to strengthen Ontario's economy and encourage the creation of the new jobs that we need.

She said that first of all, we must do a better job of building a competitive business climate to stimulate job-creating investment. She suggested that by making regulatory reform an immediate priority in the first 100 days of a government led by her, by taking steps to simplify the tax code, and by reducing business taxes, we would be sending a very powerful message to Ontario job creators that we are open for business once again. Of course, Mr. Speaker, that is very important for business confidence.

We have to acknowledge that provincial government initiatives are only one element of creating or deflating business confidence. There are other factors at play, some of which we can't control. But the fact is we do have an opportunity to encourage business confidence with the policies that come out of this place. Obviously, from our perspective, we would suggest that the provincial government hasn't been doing that for the last 13 years, and we need to do better.

Christine Elliott has advocated policies that would, in fact, create that strong sense of business confidence in terms of the support from the provincial Legislature and the government and, hopefully, that would stimulate the creation of many thousands of jobs in the province of Ontario.

Secondly, she talked about a renewed focus on skills training and the need to reform the apprenticeship system. She said that that would pay immediate dividends in the form of job creation. I think she's absolutely right about that and should be commended for that suggestion.

She said that young people and employers need incentives to pursue the existing job opportunities in today's economy. I agree with that, without qualification. Certainly, we have a very high youth unemployment rate in the province of Ontario. I think it's about double the overall rate, and that should be of concern of all of us. We need to do better on that particular public policy challenge.

She also suggested that we need to open up student loans to apprentices, ensuring that more young people would pursue careers in good-paying, skilled trades.

0920

She also advocated a new approach to supporting creative innovation and entrepreneurship in our economy. She suggested that by issuing a competitive challenge, rewarding excellence in achievement, speeding up the work of the Ontario Securities Commission and creating an advanced manufacturing fund to support research and development, this would help us to lead the world in innovation—again, all laudable goals that I support and that many in my community support as well.

She also outlined her vision for strengthening our economy in the long term, including new ideas to pay for

the new infrastructure that we need. She committed to bringing stability to our hydro rates, which have skyrocketed in recent years, which in turn has contributed to the loss of some 300,000 manufacturing jobs in the province of Ontario.

I'm privileged to serve as our party's critic to the Minister of Economic Development, Infrastructure and Employment. I certainly endorse the member for Whitby–Oshawa, Christine Elliott's, economic plan and believe that it is obviously a plan that would take us in the right direction in the province of Ontario.

I would also add in the brief time that I have left that we have a significant number of infrastructure projects in our riding. I've advocated for my riding, as you know, Mr. Speaker, on a long list of infrastructure projects. The fact is that the provincial government plans and certainly budgets to spend a significant amount of money on infrastructure. Again, page 291 of the budget papers shows that they intend to spend \$13.5 billion this year on infrastructure projects. I know they're going to spend that money; they plan to spend it, they committed, they talk about it all the time, and the Premier is tweeting constantly about the infrastructure plans they have. They are going to spend that money, so I am saying that in Wellington–Halton Hills, we have our infrastructure challenges, we have our needs and we need our fair share of that money.

I again submit to the government the need for the Highway 6 Morriston bypass through Puslinch township, south of the 401 on the way to Hamilton. The Premier has acknowledged that that project is needed in this Legislature, and we ask that the Minister of Transportation—something I've been advocating for many years now—place that project on the five-year plan for new construction, which we know as the southern highways program. I know that the minister, after the tabling of the budget, goes through a process of reviewing the various project ideas that exist. His staff know about the need; I'm sure his staff will fill him in on any additional information he needs, but there's a strong business coalition that has come together in support of this project, including all of the local councils, chambers of commerce and so forth. We need to see that project done.

We need a new courthouse in Halton. We need a new Holy Cross Catholic school in Georgetown. I've supported GO Transit improvements for my riding going back to 2008. We need high-speed Internet service in rural Ontario. We need support for the town of Erin waste water management system, something that needs to be addressed very soon.

I realize I'm now out of time. I've got a long list of other projects I'd like to talk about, and I will at another opportunity.

Mr. Speaker, I do not support the general budgetary policy of this government and I'll be voting against this motion.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): I thank the member from Wellington–Halton Hills for his informal comments with regard to Bill 91. Further questions and comments?

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: I'd like to thank the member from Wellington–Halton Hills for participating in this debate today; it's a very important bill and debate on the budget.

In his opening remarks, he referred to looking at the blue book, and then corrected himself and said, "Oh, it was the red book." For us on this side: Blue book, red book; it's one and the same.

Ms. Cindy Forster: It's an orange book.

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: It's one and the same. The budget that the Liberal government is presenting looks like a Progressive Conservative budget. It's not very progressive, as the Premier claims to be progressive.

One of the things that I want to point out is seniors, because I am the seniors' critic. Just today, there was some information in the paper—and it was on the news as well—about how more and more seniors are filing for insolvency. It speaks to the fact that seniors have a very difficult time paying the bills. They have a very difficult time affording the rent, paying for their food and then for hydro.

In this budget, as the government proposed, they're going to be selling hydro. What's that going to do to the rates? What's that going to do to the seniors' budgets, their household budgets? They can barely afford to make ends meet now. It says that more seniors are filing for bankruptcy. How shameful is that, that seniors can't live in dignity after they retire, with some comfort, some peace of mind? Selling off hydro is not going to help seniors. It's only going to raise the rates, and seniors are going to be strapped even more and will find themselves in a more precarious situation, find themselves struggling every day just to put food on the table, because their hydro bills are higher.

I received my hydro bill, and it went up last Friday. The rates have gone up. It has gone up \$25 a month. Speaker, how do people who are on fixed incomes afford these kinds of ridiculous increases?

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

Mrs. Kathryn McGarry: It's a pleasure to rise today and add a few comments to the debate in the House. I've heard from the Wellington–Halton Hills member and the member from London–Fanshawe about this very important budget bill, Bill 91.

I'm very supportive of this budget. I just wanted to point out that during the budget processes, when we look at some of our construction programs—we have an on-going expansion of Cambridge Memorial Hospital that was cemented in the budget a couple of budgets ago, and I'm very proud of the fact that it's still committed to finishing and completing this project. It has been a very necessary part of our health care system for the residents of Cambridge and North Dumfries township. We did the ground-breaking in September, and it makes me very happy to go past and see the crane there, see the construction equipment.

All those things are still in our budget, to make sure that we continue on this very important project. It not

only supports the construction workers and the highly skilled trades workers in Cambridge, so they have ongoing work for five years, but it also gives a sense of comfort to the residents of our community, who had been wanting and needing this expansion for so long.

That's one of the things that I would point out to the member from Wellington–Halton Hills: that it's very important to actually vote for the budgets that have these big construction programs in them.

I also just wanted to point out the investment in our youth, with the increases in the Ontario youth strategies and our investments in the pre-apprenticeship programs, which really benefit Cambridge students. We have Conestoga College, right in Cambridge, which has a lot of good apprenticeship programs for our youth in ongoing, highly skilled trades.

Speaker, I know I'm out of time. I'll add my voice later to the debate, but I just really want to say that I'm in full support of Bill 91, the budget.

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

Mr. Todd Smith: It's a pleasure to stand and bring remarks on the presentation by my colleague from Wellington–Halton Hills. I stand shoulder to shoulder with him.

There's no reason for us, and there's no reason for rural Ontario, especially small and rural municipalities, to support this budget. Don't just take our word for it, Speaker. There's a story in today's Belleville Intelligencer from the warden of Hastings county, which I'm fortunate enough to represent. He says there's "not a lot of substance" in this budget. To paraphrase, he says there are a lot of platitudes in this budget but there's no real, concrete action for rural Ontario.

The mayor of Quinte West had the opportunity to listen to the Premier speak in Belleville last week at the OSUM conference, the Ontario Small Urban Municipalities conference. He said he was not impressed at all, because there's nothing there in this budget except for reannouncements from last year and a lot of platitudes again coming from this government. There is no real action to improve life in rural Ontario. I think it just speaks to the larger picture that this government either doesn't care about rural Ontario or doesn't understand rural Ontario.

There's \$100 million in an infrastructure fund for small and rural municipalities, but they don't know how to get their hands on it. There has been no information as to how they can access that money.

At the question-and-answer last week, the deputy mayor of Greater Napanee asked about electricity infrastructure. Just last week, we learned that we were missing out on a \$100-million investment by Goodyear in Napanee, and the reason that it's not going there is because of the energy policies of this government which drove that plant and that infrastructure to Mexico.

There's nothing in this budget for us to support. I stand shoulder to shoulder with my colleague from Wellington–Halton Hills, and we will not be supporting the budget.

0930

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

Ms. Cindy Forster: In this short two minutes, I think I'm going to comment on the comments.

The member from Cambridge talked about the residents in her community having comfort that this construction is going on in this great expansion to the hospital in her area. Well, in my area, five hospitals have closed or are slated for closing: Fort Erie, Port Colborne, Niagara-on-the-Lake, just April 1 in the member from Niagara Falls' riding, and a proposed closure of the Welland hospital, a hospital that supports a population of 100,000 people.

This Liberal budget with its 6% cuts and zero increases to hospitals is continuing to lay off nurses in this province—hundreds of nurses have been laid off across this province. As a nurse, the member will know that every time you decrease a nursing position, you increase mortality rates of patients. In this province and across North America, there are lots of studies on this issue.

Teachers are on strike because of budget cuts.

There are 6% cuts to all of the agencies that actually support occupational health and safety in this province. Just in the last month we have had five deaths here in the city of Toronto in areas of construction—people falling off of scaffolds, people dying in blasts—and at the same time, this government is cutting those budgets.

She talked about youth strategies and their investment. Well, in fact, the Liberal government is cutting \$50 million from the youth employment tax credits that were there last year, an initiative that they put in place for a year, and all they're doing now is shifting the dollars.

I won't be supporting this budget.

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

Mr. Ted Arnott: Don't I get a response?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Oh, I'm sorry; forgive me. Absolutely. I got ahead of myself there; sorry about that.

Back to the member from Wellington–Halton Hills.

Mr. Ted Arnott: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I want to thank the member for London–Fanshawe, the member for Cambridge, the member for Prince Edward–Hastings and the member for Welland for their responses.

I'm pleased to see that the Deputy Premier is in the House, and I want to acknowledge—there was one element of the budget that was in fact good news in my constituency, and that was the restoration of the Connecting Link Program.

Reading in the Wellington Advertiser last night, I was made aware of the fact that the Deputy Premier called the warden of Wellington county, George Bridge, to inform him that the Connecting Link Program was being restored. We're trying to remember which Liberal minister cancelled the Connecting Link Program—I think it was two years ago or thereabouts; maybe two and a half years ago. We can't remember which minister it was, but I'm sure that minister would want to own up to the fact that it was a mistake.

I also want to give acknowledgement to the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs, who I think made public statements right off the bat that it was a mistake to cancel the Connecting Link Program, and I think he advocated within cabinet for its restoration.

Certainly, on this side of the House, we represent rural Ontario in this caucus, largely speaking, and we advocated for the restoration of the Connecting Link Program. I just would say to the Deputy Premier that I hope she didn't call the warden of Wellington county until after the budget was presented, because we certainly wouldn't want to divulge confidential budgetary information in advance of the presentation of the budget. So I would hope—no, we wouldn't want to do that.

But again, I do want to acknowledge that that was received as good news in our riding and certainly in the town of Halton Hills, which had felt very shortchanged by the arbitrary cancellation of the Connecting Link Program. They had a long-term plan to do a number of projects, and in fact, they are now relieved to see that that program is going to be continued.

But I still have questions about it. I asked rhetorically, when the announcement was made, whether or not this was an allocation of new money or a reallocation of existing funding programs that exist within the provincial government. I also noted in past years—although the minister said that it was a \$15-million program being reinstated. In fact, in recent years, as much as \$25 million was spent on the Connecting Link Program. So we'll reserve our final judgment on whether or not the government is keeping its commitment, and obviously bring forward the concerns of our constituents in this Legislature as this goes forward.

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

Ms. Jennifer K. French: I've had the opportunity to learn many new things since being elected. Every time I speak on behalf of my constituents, I ensure that I have done my homework. I want to be sure that their voices are heard in this Legislature. I also want to know all that I can about issues that affect the province. So here I stand to discuss the budget and to fight to keep hydro public.

The teacher in me cannot resist the opportunity to shed a bit of light on the proud history of public hydro and electricity. Since we are literally standing here on the verge of a new government-induced dark age—literally—our province is on the brink of a time that families and businesses won't be able to afford to keep their lights on. Since that is the case, let me share a bit about public power so we can fully appreciate it for the next few weeks that we still have it.

I'd like to share an article from the Dictionary of Canadian Biography on Sir Adam Beck. But before I do that, I'll flash forward. Sir Adam Beck fought for public hydro. He was knighted because he championed good ideas for the people. In fact, a statue was erected in his honour; a bronze monument of Sir Adam Beck is not far from here. Schools have been named in his memory—schools that soon might not be able to pay for their elec-

tricity and, like so many others, might have to close when costs skyrocket and funding evaporates. But I digress.

I'll read part of an article researched and written by H.V. Nelles. "The Prometheus of Canadian politics during the first quarter of the 20th century, Sir Adam Beck, brought the inestimable benefit of cheap electric light and power to the citizens of Ontario through a publicly owned utility, the Hydro-Electric Power Commission of Ontario. He had to fight continuously to build Hydro, as it came to be called, but supported by municipal allies he succeeded in creating one of the largest publicly owned integrated electric systems in the world.... Adam Beck more than any other public figure in Ontario reshaped the institutional life of the province by making electricity a public utility and legitimizing, through his accomplishments, public ownership as an effective instrument of policy throughout Canada."

Beck is quoted as insisting that, "It is the duty of the government to see that development is not hindered by permitting a handful of people to enrich themselves out of these treasures at the expense of the general public." What a great thought. In fact, Mr. Speaker, I'm going to read it again: "It is the duty of the government to see that development is not hindered by permitting a handful of people to enrich themselves out of these treasures at the expense of the general public." Continuing from the article, Beck "extolled the power of abundant cheap light to brighten the homes of working people; cheap electricity would create more jobs in the factories of the province; hydro would lighten the drudgery of the barn and the household; and electric railways radiating out from the cities into the countryside would create more prosperous, progressive farms even as light and power made brighter, cleaner cities."

In 1914, just more than 100 years ago, he received a knighthood. Here we are, 100 years later, rush-debating—probably in six and a half hours—so that this majority government can tear public hydro down and sell it for parts to some backroom money crowd. When I realized that the Premier of our province in just a few weeks will have sold affordable public power without the understanding or support of the people of this province, all the while knowing it is a despicable thing to do—it turns my stomach. The Premier of this province and leader of the government of Ontario is actually undertaking to punch the lights out of the middle class and the business community and to make sure that our struggling economy can now look forward to struggling in the dark. She is ensuring that small businesses will always stay small and won't be able to pay their bills. Wynne's money crowd wants to make a quick buck while the rest of us pay the price.

Just to review, Sir Adam Beck wanted to "brighten the homes of working people"; Premier Kathleen Wynne wants to ensure higher rates for families who are already paying the highest bills in Canada. Sir Adam Beck knew that "cheap electricity would create more jobs in the factories of the province"; Premier Kathleen Wynne wants to ensure that companies like General Motors pay

more and more to do business here and is undermining the goal of strengthening opportunities for growth in manufacturing. Sir Adam Beck knew that “hydro would lighten the drudgery of the barn and the household”; Premier Kathleen Wynne doesn’t seem to care that constituents across this province already can scarcely afford to heat their homes or use their appliances, and now she might expect them to ration their electric light usage. She wants us back in the dark ages. This government likes to keep Ontarians in the dark, and now she wants Ontarians to live in the dark. If you think I’m being dramatic, which might happen, I will put you in touch with my constituents who are still trying to pay bills from two winters ago—people who live in a basement apartment and only have one baseboard heater that they have to ration use of so they can afford to eat. And that’s just because of deregulation since 1999. What on earth are they going to do once their rates jump another 20% or so?

Sir Adam Beck proposed that “electric railways radiating out from the cities into the countryside would create more prosperous, progressive farms” while “light and power made brighter, cleaner cities.”

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But Premier Kathleen Wynne just celebrated a diesel train and has pretended that the point of selling off revenue-generating assets was to invest in transit. They’re sneak-selling a revenue-generating asset that puts money into our provincial health care, into our provincial education, into communities across the province to put 3% of what’s been promised into the Toronto pot for Toronto transit. I begrudge Toronto nothing, but 3% at the expense of every business and household across the province? Who came up with this plan?

The Liberals across from us seem surprised by the little details that we’ve been bringing forward from Bill 91. Who wrote this bill? The Minister of Finance doesn’t seem to have read the fine print. Maybe things are different on that side, but over here when we write a bill, we’re involved in the process. I’ve got a private member’s bill coming up and I know what’s in it, because that’s my job. My name is going to be on it. It is intending to make something better, to fix something. Bill 91 is tearing apart our public power and making a mockery of our democratic process. Shame on this Premier and shame on the Liberal caucus that isn’t standing up to her and isn’t standing up for their constituents.

To finish the story of Sir Adam Beck and to again quote from the article, “He worried on his deathbed that political partisanship would overcome it and that Hydro as an independent entity would not survive. But in his absence it continued to flourish, firmly rooted in the towns and cities, along the back concessions and amongst the merchants, workers, farmers and homemakers of the province. Hydroelectricity generated and delivered by a crown corporation to municipally owned utilities at the lowest cost had become an Ontario institution that would outlive changing governments and passing ideologies”—until now; until Premier Kathleen Wynne; until 2015,

when this short-sighted Liberal government plans to pull the plug on public power.

New Democrats have invited Ontarians to fight against the sale of Hydro One and, Mr. Speaker, you can too if you go to www.youpaytheprice.ca. We are also holding town halls and meetings across the province. Since you weren’t able to make it to our round table in Oshawa, I’ll be happy to tell you about it.

Andrea Horwath and I hosted a round table discussion to hear from local voices about the sale of hydro. We are fortunate to have a very active local coalition called Keep Hydro Public and I am pleased to read to you from their presentation:

“Keep Hydro Public is a group of concerned Oshawa citizens. We are not opposed to transit and infrastructure, and realize that every budget has plums and barbs, but the sell-off of Hydro One is a barb, will raise hydro rates and have a direct impact on manufacturing jobs all across Ontario and we believe it will be difficult to retain the jobs we presently have. Wasteful spending scandals on eHealth, Ornge, gas plants, software glitches etc. could have paid for transit and infrastructure without selling Hydro One.”

Also at that meeting were teachers who recognize the damage that even less funding, as a result of less revenue, would do and how it would impact our education system and students. At the meeting were community members who can’t understand why this government won’t listen to anyone. At the meeting were electricians who were concerned about what privatizing and lack of oversight will mean in terms of safety standards and certifications. Electricity isn’t a game. This is serious. Again, it’s clear that this government is making a rash, short-sighted decision where communities will be paying the price.

Oshawa, like cities across the province, is concerned about what this sell-off will mean. This isn’t partisan; this is a provincial concern.

I would like to share the front page of *Business Matters*, which is a regular publication in my community from the Greater Oshawa Chamber of Commerce. The headline is “Budgets 2015: Business Drowning in Energy Debt and No GO for Durham.” I’ll read excerpts from it to share the voice of businesses on this issue:

“With the Ontario budget just completed, the Ontario chamber and the chamber network are concerned about the government’s decisions that are negatively impacting business ... undermining the capacity of businesses to grow and create jobs in Ontario.

“The Ontario Energy Board recently announced that starting May 1 rates will go up by \$5.71 per month for an average Ontario household. However, this hydro rate increase has far greater significance for businesses. Increases will range between 7% and 15% per kilowatt hour, impacting, for example, restaurants, fast food outlets and small industry that operate during on-peak and mid-peak times.... This takes on much greater significance given the backdrop of an impending partial sale of Hydro One.”

The chamber goes on, Mr. Speaker: “Budget 2015 does little to address business’ concerns over rising elec-

tricity rates,' stated Bob Malcolmson, CEO of the Greater Oshawa Chamber of Commerce, 'and according to the most recent Ontario Chamber survey, rising electricity prices are the number one factor hurting business competitiveness. Last year alone 2,700 companies left Ontario.'"

Just this past week it was announced that 1,000 jobs at GM will be gone. That's 1,000 good-paying jobs just gone. In the auto industry, one job in manufacturing has seven to 10 spin-off jobs in the connected industry. That's a lot of workers. Those are a lot of families. Those are a lot of connected businesses. On the heels of that announcement, this government is ramming through this legislation with no one wanting them to do it; ramming through legislation to increase the cost of electricity and the cost of doing business in Ontario. How can businesses exist when they can't predict the rising costs or afford to pay them? Who is driving this runaway train?

Speaker, I wonder, through you to the Premier, what hydro experts they have talked to on this issue. What do you even know about hydro? What's required to build and maintain an efficient hydro system? What do you understand about generation, transmission and distribution systems? Who is your expert, and what do they know about it? Ed Clark is a banker, so who is your hydro expert? Who is advising you? You don't know what you're selling and why you are selling it. If you haven't talked to a hydro expert then you don't know what you're doing.

Paul Kahnert worked in the industry for 33 years. He knows hydro. I'm glad to be able to share parts of a recent article that he wrote for the Hamilton Spectator. Paul worked in the industry, as I said, for 33 years and was spokesperson for the Ontario Electricity Coalition from 2001 to 2010, which campaigned against hydro privatization across the province and stopped the sale of Hydro One in court in the spring of 2002.

The title of the article was "Wynne's Sale of Hydro One Is a Betrayal of the Public Interest." From the article: "If you're driving your car and the steering wheel comes off in your hands, do you step on the gas or step on the brakes? Hydro rates are out of control in Ontario and with the proposed sale of Hydro One, Kathleen Wynne is stepping on the gas...."

"Where is the demand coming from? There are no public demonstrations outside Queen's Park demanding that Hydro One be sold. The demand is coming from Bay Street and the investment community. Wynne is also looking for a quick fix for Ontario's deficit.

"There is no such thing as free money. There are permanent consequences from privatization.

"Giving up forever all future revenue (now \$1 billion a year) for a one-time cash payment for Hydro One is not a very wise thing to do."

He continues, "Wynne is promising that all money from the sale will go towards transportation infrastructure. Infrastructure lasts 40 to 50 years and then needs to be rebuilt again. The problem with selling public assets is that you can only sell them once. We said 14 years ago

that it's like burning your furniture to heat your home. What do you burn next?

"The private sector does a fabulous job of manufacturing transformers, insulators, wire, relays, switches, connectors and all the materials we need to build our electrical system but they do a poor job of running hydro in the public interest. They can't. Their fiduciary duty legally requires them to maximize profits for their shareholder. Now, more than \$1 billion a year now goes out of the province in private power profits. That money used to go out to businesses and citizens in the form of low and stable rates.

"Politicians did not sell Ontario Hydro during the depths of the Great Depression nor during the height of the Second World War. Those economic times were far worse than what we face now. Those politicians wisely kept hydro to create jobs and to help the economy recover from those lean times.

"The world's climate is in trouble. Now, more than ever, it is critical that governments have the levers of public ownership to curb global warming and institute real conservation programs.

"The hydro privatization experiment has failed in Ontario. In fact, there is not one jurisdiction anywhere in the world where privatization hasn't resulted in big rate hikes. The promise of deregulation was 'lower rates.' The promise of smart meters was that 'smart meters will save you money.' Both promises were completely false."

He continues, if can you imagine: "Kathleen Wynne needs to scrap the idea of selling Hydro One and put the brakes on hydro deregulation and privatization. It's in the public interest, both for the economy and environment.

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"It's important to note that during the provincial election on September 5, 2003, McGuinty, low in the polls, took the main campaign plank from the NDP and promised 'public power.' Closing the phony IESO electricity market and regulating rates would be a good start on that promise.

"Let's remember that Sir Adam Beck, a Tory, backed by business, after a 10-year campaign and 18 municipal referendums, brought public power to Ontario in 1905. For 95 years, Ontario grew and prospered under public power. On his deathbed, Sir Adam Beck said, 'I wish I could have lived long enough to build a band of iron around Hydro, to keep it safe from the politicians.' He might have added, 'And safe from the profiteers.'" I'm pleased to be able to share these words from Paul Kahnert, who remembers because he'd gone through this back in 2002. And back in 2002, Judge Gans ruled on April 19 that the provincial government did not have the right to sell Hydro One and that it belonged to the people of Ontario.

Ernie Eves didn't like that, so in June 2002 Eves passed Bill 58, which gave the Tory government the legal ability to sell Hydro One. But they didn't dare sell it because the Star poll of the day said that 94% of Ontarians didn't want it. What a startling thought: The government of the day listening to the people of the province. But

here we are with this government, on this day, determined to put us back 100 years. Is this a Liberal plan or is this a Kathleen Wynne initiative? I don't know.

On September 5, 2003, then-Liberal Premier Dalton McGuinty said in an exclusive interview with the Toronto Sun's editorial board, "Deregulation and privatization hasn't worked and we can't go back there. I've drawn a lesson from that. Number one, we've got to keep hydro public."

Interjection.

Ms. Jennifer K. French: Right?

Who is driving this? Premier Wynne, you don't have the moral authority. The legal authority you are borrowing from Tory legislation. You don't have a mandate. You haven't consulted the owners: the people of Ontario. Have you really thought this through? Do you have any clue of the damage you are doing? Do you care? You are going to get rid of 10 or 20 years of profit and you are selling the future out from under our kids. And somehow, you're defending that decision.

I would also ask you, on a point of interest: What are you going to do with the statue—are you going to bury that too—of Sir Adam Beck, or are we going to melt that down for the bronze and sell it off?

This government says it is accountable and transparent. Transparent? The only thing that is clear is that this Premier and her blind followers don't know right from wrong.

This is an historic turning point. This government is flipping the switch on opportunity and growth in the province. Ontarians will pay the price now and for generations to come. This government, though, if they don't stop for sober second thought, is going to have to live with doing this to Ontario. Selling public power is an awful thing to do.

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

Hon. Dipika Damerla: It's a privilege to speak to this bill, the budget bill. I have to say that I'm a little dismayed and disappointed at the misinformation that was being presented and disguised as debate from the member opposite. I'm just wondering: What part of our proposal does the member opposite not understand? Is it the part that says that the Ontario Energy Board will continue to set prices? Is it the part that says that Hydro One will continue to be regulated, with the Ontario government as the largest shareholder? Is it the part that says that the Ontario government will have a veto on all key decisions; the part that allows us, in part because of this transaction, to build the LRT in Mississauga; or the electrification of the GO train that is going to allow 15-minute service on so many GO corridors and two-way, all-day service? Is it the 100,000 jobs that our infrastructure plan is going to create every year? Is it the Eglinton Crosstown LRT that she doesn't understand? Is it the Sheppard East LRT that she doesn't support? Is it the Finch West LRT that she doesn't support? I just fail to understand: What part of the plan does she have issue with? Are these not good initiatives? Is it the structuring

of the way we are going to broaden the shareholding base of Hydro One that she doesn't understand? I'm just surprised at some of the rhetoric I heard because it seems to either stem from a wilful desire to not understand the proposal, or perhaps she just hasn't understood the proposal.

She went on to say that on their side of the House, they actually read that which they write and they actually read that which is written, so I would ask her to go back and reread the budget bill. I would ask her to back and reread the proposal that we have put forward for Hydro One.

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

Mr. Monte McNaughton: I'm happy to rise today to provide some feedback on the Liberal budget. I'd actually like to congratulate to the member from Oshawa, who obviously did a lot of homework and research for her remarks this morning. Also, I'm happy to follow the Associate Minister of Health.

I think our PC finance critic yesterday, the member from Nipissing, had the best line of the day when it came to the Liberal budget, and that is that the Liberals need to start paying with a debit card versus a credit card.

We all know that there is a fiscal crisis in this province. We're seeing in this budget that it is clearly a typical tax-and-spend Liberal budget. In fact, I just read in one of the media reports this morning that there's \$2 billion in extra taxes and fees in this budget. Of course, this allows the Liberals to continue with some of their wasteful spending in Ontario.

Speaking of the spending side, we're seeing this government continually increase by billions and billions of dollars the spending side of the budget, and long-term, it's devastating for the province of Ontario. I often speak about the parents out there who have kids, and we're just passing this burden on to the next generation. That's the greatest injustice of the Kathleen Wynne Liberal government: to pass the burden to the next generation of Ontarians.

It's the responsibility of this Legislature to deal with the crisis that's in front of us. To see Kathleen Wynne and the Liberals continually tax and spend and make life tougher for the next generation is the greatest injustice.

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

Mr. Michael Mantha: I was enjoying the comments from the member from Oshawa this morning. As I was reading my mail—this is from a constituent up in Elliot Lake. I don't have their permission to read out their name yet, but I will read their views. It says:

"Dear Premier" Kathleen Wynne:

"My wife and I are viewing with alarm the media reports of your plans to sell off ... hydro, or at least a major portion of it, to private investors. We are aware that in the last election you scored a victory at the polls and received a majority in the Legislature. However, having viewed your election platform when you were running for office, we were well aware of your plans once you formed a government. Nowhere in your platform was there a mention of selling" Hydro One.

They go on to say, “It is our opinion that this is why you did not make the sale of hydro part of your election platform, and it is furthermore our opinion that not having done so, your mandate does not address its sale. If you insist on acting on this proposal, you should hold a referendum on the matter. We also expect that this will not happen because you are well aware that Ontario voters are very much against such a plan....”

“If you insist on carrying out such folly, selling such a valuable asset to build rapid transit that will forever require a large subsidy to continue operating, and having sold a revenue-generating asset to build it, where will the subsidy come from?”

“Please scrap this foolish and unpopular idea and come up with a better plan. Another Liberal administration after that disastrous one of Dalton McGuinty’s would be too much to bear.”

These are from constituents of mine who I saw over the weekend. That was the resounding response that I got at the Elliot Lake Trade Show this weekend, where I got thousands of signatures, trying to steer this government in order to get away from their wrong-headed idea.

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

Mr. Yvan Baker: It’s an honour to speak today to the budget. I have to say that I’m incredibly proud of this budget. I’m incredibly proud of our Premier and the work that this government has been doing. It’s easy to find fault in things; it’s not always easy to find solutions. I think the Premier and this government have worked very hard to find solutions to some of the challenges they face, but to seize the opportunities for the future. This is a budget that thinks about the short term, but also one that thinks about the long term.

There’s just a few things that I want to highlight in the budget to add to what the minister was saying earlier. On jobs and the economy: In this budget, you have the introduction of the Canada-Ontario Job Grant, covering “two-thirds of total eligible training costs” with “flexibility for small employers”—supporting business, supporting employers. We’re “renewing the Ontario Youth Jobs Strategy by investing an additional \$250 million over the next two years,” helping our young people access the job market and address that youth unemployment we face. We’re investing \$55 million towards in-class apprenticeship training and support programs, again, helping our young people get jobs. When it comes to developing our highly-skilled work force, we’re investing \$75 million to support construction of a six-storey, 260,000-square-foot learning resource commons at Humber College. This is in my community of Etobicoke. I’m incredibly proud of that. It’s something that’s going to enhance the opportunities for young people in the years to come. I talked about the youth jobs strategy: \$23 million towards the Apprenticeship Enhancement Fund, investing in equipment, technology and space, again, helping young people get jobs. We’re investing \$130 billion over 10 years in infrastructure.

Again, this is thinking about the future, not just thinking about the present. I think what this budget has done is all of this and many other things, while at the same time thinking about our fiscal future and ensuring that we’re good custodians of the taxpayer dollar. That means laying out a plan to balance the budget, doing so gradually, doing so responsibly, but doing so. It is so critical and important—not just to this generations but to future generations—that we do so, so that we have the funding to provide those programs and that quality of life that we’ve all come to expect and enjoy.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Back to the member from Oshawa for her final comments.

Ms. Jennifer K. French: I’m pleased to respond to the comments of my colleagues in this House.

To the Associate Minister of Health and Long-Term Care: It actually isn’t a wilful desire not to understand. It’s a wilful desire to actually read what’s there and not just listen to the spin and to understand that, yes, the OEB sets rates; they set a 42% increase in gas rates. You gave us a list of positives, and that’s great. Where’s the list of negatives? I’ve got one for you: no FIPPA, no Auditor General, no FAO, no freedom of information, no Ombudsman oversight and no transparency. There’s a list for you. Also, I know that 60% trumps 40% every time.

To the member from Lambton–Kent–Middlesex: Thank you, I appreciate your comments, your attention and your shout-out for my homework.

To the member from Algoma–Manitoulin: I know that you’re hearing from your constituents, and I’m pleased that you’re sharing that with us. We’re all hearing from our constituents. Even the Liberal members are hearing from their constituents, and I would challenge them to listen to those constituents.

To the member from Etobicoke Centre: Thank you for bringing up jobs and the economy and talking about the Youth Jobs Strategy. The people of Oshawa are very concerned about what on earth we’re going to do for jobs now and what on earth we’re going to do for any kind of job security in the future, especially, when we’re looking at GM, We’re in flux right now. We’ve just had that announcement. We’ve lost 1,000 jobs and all of those spin-off jobs in the community. Our community is going to be affected now and down the road. We don’t know what will happen. Maybe we will be able to secure a GM product, and things will be fine. But if the hydro rates continue to go up and up and up and they can’t plan for those expenses—they don’t know what they’re going to be. What business can plan when they can’t predict? What business is going to feel comfortable staying in a climate when they can’t afford to keep the lights on?

To your point of gradually and responsibly rolling out this budget: We’re talking two weeks and then the public power is gone. That doesn’t seem gradual, nor does it seem responsible.

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

Mr. Mike Colle: I’ll be sharing my time with the members from Cambridge, Kitchener Centre, and Beaches–East York.

The C.D. Howe Institute estimates—this is in a study in 2013—“the congestion cost for the greater Toronto area and Hamilton to be between \$7.5 billion”—with a B—“to \$11 billion”—with a B—“per year.” That’s what congestion costs. People stuck in traffic on the 401 and the QEW, stuck going to work every day, delivering goods and services—these are people who are contributing to the economy. If we think we’re going to pay for our hospitals and schools with an economy that loses \$7 billion to \$11 billion a year, we ain’t gonna do it. We have no choice.

The Conservatives and NDP basically have no plan. All they do is say, “Do nothing,” and somehow, magically, this congestion will disappear. This is a critical issue that is costing everybody in Ontario extra time lost, extra time to pay for gas and extra time in delivering food, products and industrial products.

These billions of dollars cost everybody, year after year. This is not a one-time cost, so building infrastructure—roads, bridges, public transit—is an imperative. We have no choice. Therefore, I wonder what their plan is to build transit or to build roads or to fix our bridges. They have none. All they say is, “We don’t like the way you’re going to do it.”

Sure, the way we’re going to do it is outlined in the budget. They’ve got, as usual, everything negative to say about Ontario, everything negative to say about the future of this province. But the future of this province is in its economy, in moving goods and services. We’ve got an amazing workforce in this province, from Cornwall to Kenora, but we can’t let this workforce go to work if we’ve got people stuck in traffic and trucks stuck in traffic every day—\$7 billion to \$11 billion a year.

What is their plan to do something? The plan is basically zero. All they say is, “Oh, we love Hydro One” all of a sudden. I’ve been sitting here for a number of years; I never heard one of them on either side ever stand up and say anything good about Hydro One in 20 years—now they love Hydro One—or the Beer Store—now they’re in love with the Beer Store.

Now, all of a sudden, every day, they’re saying, “Whoa. Isn’t Hydro One fantastic?” They stood up here, day after day, hammering it as poorly run: “It’s got to be done better. People are complaining.” The Beer Store: “We’ve got to get more competition in the Beer Store.” We finally do something, and they say, “Oh, don’t do it. We love it as it is.”

The status quo, Mr. Speaker, is not an option, because we can’t borrow any more. Maybe that’s what they want to do. Maybe we should increase borrowing.

Ms. Cindy Forster: You can’t borrow more.

Mr. Mike Colle: Right, so we can’t borrow.

Or maybe they say perhaps that we should increase taxes to pay for infrastructure. They basically have no way of paying to build the roads, the bridges and the public transit.

As we build the roads, the bridges and the public transit, we actually do something fantastic, and that is that we give people good-paying jobs in construction and all the supportive work that goes into construction—all the

design work, all the planning work. People actually make a good living in building infrastructure.

They don’t like that. They say, “Don’t do it. Don’t build the infrastructure. We can’t afford it. We don’t have the money. Don’t do it this way.”

We need the jobs. We need to get rid of the congestion. This budget basically makes an investment in Ontario, in its people and its future, so that we can grow the economy to provide health care, education, and help for our most vulnerable. They don’t have any idea how they would do that. They just say, “Don’t do it your way. It’s wrong.”

And what is their way? They have no way, Mr. Speaker: no plan, no idea; nothing but criticism. You’ll never hear them say one good thing about the budget. It’s impossible to find one thing. They’re negative—

Mr. Michael Mantha: Because it’s a Liberal budget.

Mr. Mike Colle: Exactly. They just said it. Because it’s from the Liberals, they’re against every aspect of the budget.

But the people want to get rid of congestion, and the people want jobs, and they don’t want us to just defend the old Beer Store and Hydro One and say “Oh, don’t touch these holy grails.”

They’re stuck in the past. Get with it. Get with the people who want jobs and want to get rid of congestion.

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

Mrs. Kathryn McGarry: I’m glad to add my voice this morning to the budget debate. I certainly welcome some of the comments from my colleague from Eglinton–Lawrence.

1010

One of the things that I’m really happy to see in this budget is the support that we’ve got for children and youth. I’ve spoken frequently in the House about my two appropriate-aged sons for the youth jobs strategy—I have an 18- and a 21-year-old at home—but it’s also the friends that they bring home from school and those friends who are looking forward to their future and wondering what’s out there for them. So I’m really pleased to see that we’re renewing Ontario’s Youth Jobs Strategy by investing \$250 million more over two years. That benefits the students and youth in Cambridge, in particular, and I see a great benefit so they have more options for their future.

I wanted to talk about Cambridge’s manufacturing sector. Cambridge was actually founded on manufacturing. I wanted to say that I’m really happy with the fact that our advanced manufacturing sector has grown over 4% in the last few years. It also means that our manufacturing plants need more highly skilled trades. I’ve often noted that Conestoga College in Cambridge has many skilled trades programs, and I’m really pleased to see another investment of \$13 million over two years for pre-apprenticeship programs and investing another \$19 million over the next three years to support training for apprenticeship programs. This really benefits the manufacturing plants in my city.

Investing \$23 million more over two years in the Apprenticeship Enhancement Fund in Cambridge is also

great news. As I've said, we've been growing manufacturing, and I've had a lot of conversations and tours of our local manufacturing companies. They are very happy not only with the investment in the highly skilled trades department and the apprenticeship programs, but they're also very pleased about the ongoing support with our Southwestern Ontario Development Fund. We have many businesses in Cambridge that have benefited from the investment from this fund, and many more that are looking to apply to this program. Recent examples are Meridian Manufacturing, Cambridge Towel, and COM DEV, to name a few. They're very happy with the ongoing support.

The Jobs and Prosperity Fund is also important to a dynamic business environment, in particular, again, in Cambridge because of our highly skilled and manufacturing plants.

Some of the recent tours that I've had in Cambridge really confirm the fact that the energy program from the Ontario Liberal government over the last few years has been key to their success. Why? Well, I toured a plant on Friday, and part of their business is making vinyl products. When there is an interruption in electricity supply, the batch is ruined, and they have a whole protocol on how to shut down the machines and make sure that they can take the molten vinyl off the lines before it gums up and interferes with their machinery. This company has been in Cambridge for over 100 years, so they remember the times in the 1990s, and again the big shutdown in their plant in 2003 when the electricity system failed in our part of the world. They really do appreciate the fact that now when they flip the switch on, the electricity system is reliable, and that they're able to continue to manufacture.

As a matter of fact, at a recent round table, there were 19 manufacturers and businesses at that round table on economic development put on by our chamber of commerce. Business after business kept praising the fact that they do have reliable electricity, which is key to making sure that their manufacturing processes are intact. It's a real waste when they have to ruin a batch of product if the electricity fails in the meantime.

We've had a recent company invest in Cambridge because of the low corporate taxes and because of the ongoing investment in the highly skilled trades project. We welcomed Héroux-Devtek just a couple of months ago to open their doors, and they're building high-end landing gear for big aircraft. We're really happy to have them, and it's because of the ongoing support in this budget from the Jobs and Prosperity Fund and the ongoing investment in skills training.

Speaker, I'm going to stop there and allow my colleagues also to enter in, but I'm certainly very, very supportive of this budget.

Debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Seeing as it is now 10:15, this Legislature stands recessed until 10:30.

The House recessed from 1015 to 1030.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Steve Clark: I want to welcome the paramedics that are here from CUPE Ontario and the committee chair, Chris Day. Unfortunately, I think the breakfast was over by the time I got down there, but I know that a number of my caucus colleagues will be meeting with them today, so welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I hate to do "me too," but that's exactly where I'm going. I just want to welcome the paramedics on behalf of our leader, Andrea Horwath, and New Democrats, and specifically the chair, Chris Day, who is here today with paramedics from across the province. Welcome.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: On behalf of our Premier and the entire government of Ontario, I do want to welcome and thank all the paramedics who are here today. Thank you very much for being the first responders on pretty much every scene when it comes to injuries in our community. As we celebrate first responders week, we thank you for your sacrifice and your heroism in our community.

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: I'd like, in particular with the paramedics, to introduce Patricia MacFarlane from the Perth paramedic service, and Norm Robillard from the Ottawa paramedics, whom I met with earlier. We had a great chat on the post-traumatic stress disorder issue.

Mr. Wayne Gates: Once again, I'd like to welcome the paramedics from Niagara Falls. They're here as part of CUPE Queen's Park paramedic day: Blaine Bittman, Jim Simpson, Jon Brunarski, Dave Barnett and Kyle Gemmill.

Hon. Michael Coteau: I'd like to introduce to the Legislature today Miles Wu and Morgan Stahl, who are working as interns at the Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Sport this summer. Welcome.

Mr. John Yakabuski: I'd like to introduce today, with the CUPE paramedics—the ambulance committee of Ontario is having a Queen's Park lobby day—from my riding of Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke, Chris Day, who is also the acting chair of the CUPE Ambulance Committee of Ontario. Welcome to Queen's Park. I've had a chance to meet with Chris in the past and had very good discussions.

M^{me} France Gélinas: I also have a visitor all the way from Sudbury, a paramedic with the city of greater Sudbury, Mr. Bruce Welch. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: I'd like to welcome Lymphoma Canada to Queen's Park today. We're also joined by two of my summer interns, Will Eberlee and Kate Dotsikas, in the members' gallery. But particularly, I'd like to take this opportunity to welcome the paramedics attending question period today in the public gallery. We've got representatives here representing over 5,500 paramedics and dispatchers, members of CUPE, and the committee chair is here, Chris Day.

Mrs. Julia Munro: I'm here on behalf of the member for Haldimand–Norfolk to introduce the family of page captain Olivia Collver: father, Mark Collver, aunt, Carolyn Wade and her grandfather, Gerald Walsh.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: I just wanted to add my voice and welcome the paramedics from the great city of Toronto, in particular Leslie Bremner, who was on my radio show today on post-traumatic stress disorder and how we need it covered.

Mr. Harinder S. Takhar: I want to introduce the grade 10 students from St. Aloysius Gonzaga high school in my riding of Mississauga–Erindale. They are here in the building and should be in the Legislature soon, along with the staff and the volunteers. I want to welcome them.

Ms. Jennifer K. French: It's hard to see from where I'm sitting, but I believe I see Pete Wright from OPSEU. I'm always glad to see him here at the Legislature. Also, I'd like to add my voice to welcome the paramedics from across Ontario. I believe I see Jeff Van Pelt from Oshawa up there, if I'm not mistaken. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. Bob Delaney: On behalf of the member for Scarborough–Guildwood and page captain Ishika Tiwari, I'd like to introduce the page's mother, Anita Tiwari, and father, Sudhir "Sid" Tiwari, who are in the public gallery this morning. Welcome.

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: I'd like to welcome a visitor, Jozef Kowalewski, here to the Legislative Assembly today. He's here to have lunch with me.

Mr. Chris Ballard: I'd like to introduce two people from the Ontario Association of Food Banks: Erin Fotheringham and Carolyn Stewart, who are with us today in the members' gallery.

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: I am happy to introduce my two interns, James Liles and Pierre-Olivier Gagné-Corriveau. They are starting their internship in my office this week. Bienvenue.

Hon. Steven Del Duca: I would also like to acknowledge that we have the three interns who will be working in my office over the summer. We're joined here today in the gallery by Alex Cohen, Francesca Cesario and Amir Soltania.

Hon. Liz Sandals: I'd like to welcome two interns who have joined my office for the summer. I think they might still be in the security lineup. Logan Byberg and Christian Pottier are joining us today for question period.

PRIVATIZATION OF PUBLIC ASSETS

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Timmins–James Bay has given me notice of intent to raise a point of privilege. I am prepared to hear the member now.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I will try not to be too long, but I just want you to know that I've filed a point of privilege not only with you, but also with the other two House leaders.

Pursuant to standing order 21(c), I gave you notice of my intent to raise a point of privilege this morning—I did that—concerning a possible breach of privilege with regard to the government's tentative deal with Ontario Power Generation and Hydro One employees, who are both represented by the Power Workers' Union.

After the recommendation of the Premier's Advisory Council on Government Assets, the government has been explicitly clear that it intends to privatize Hydro One, a publicly owned crown corporation. This decision was pursued and included in the budget bill presented to this Legislature on April 23, 2015. The proposal in this budget marks the most significant shift in public service delivery within the last 25 years, and the subsequent implications of the budget will resonate for at least a generation. Debate on the budget, including the sale of Hydro One laid out in it, has just begun, and the budget has not seen a minute of committee hearings.

The government has been clear that the proceeds from the sale of Hydro One will be used to invest in the province's infrastructure and transit. Yet the Globe and Mail on May 1, as well as other media outlets, have reported that the tentative deal with the power generation and Hydro One employees would include shares equivalent to 2.75% of their salaries every 15 years and 2.7% of their salaries every 12 years respectively. The government has consistently demonstrated an acute awareness of these negotiations of a tentative collective bargaining agreement with the Power Workers' Union.

I want to quote. This is a quote from Deb Matthews from the House on April 30: "We are very pleased that a tentative agreement has been reached with the Power Workers' Union. It is a net-zero deal, but it is" ours "for ratification. I'm not going to comment on a deal that actually is before the members of that union so they can make their" own "decision about ratification. I'm going to respect that process.

"But I am very, very pleased that the leadership of the Power Workers' Union has expressed support. I'm actually very excited that workers who work in Hydro One are demonstrating that they may be interested in being owners of" a partially owned utility. "I really believe when workers own part of the company they're working for, that" will make "for a stronger company."

Energy Minister Bob Chiarelli on April 30 in the Toronto Star said, "It's a win-win for both sides."

"It's a tentative 'net zero' contract. It's compliant with our policies"—and I underline "our policies."

Again, the Toronto Star, Bob Chiarelli, April 30: "The tentative settlement ... is very broad-based and deals with all of the important issues that we need to accommodate on both sides."

New Democrats maintain serious concerns about the negative long-term effects and costs of privatization of Hydro One. We are equally troubled by the government's decision to prematurely negotiate deals involving the distribution of Hydro One shares before the Legislature has approved such privatization. That really goes to the centre of what the point of privilege is all about. How can this happen, when the Legislature has not yet passed the legislation, that the government has somehow acquiesced to the ability of Hydro One to negotiate such a deal of shares with the Power Workers' Union? It seems to us that that's putting the cart before the horse, and also it's flagrantly against what the precedents are in this House.

1040

It is our assertion that this action represents a breach of privilege and constitutes a contempt of Parliament. Clearly the government has given the go-ahead for hydro to negotiate this without the authorization of this Legislature.

Information regarding the tentative deal reached by the government with Ontario Power Generation and Hydro One workers involving the distribution of shares that have yet to be approved by this assembly has been made publicly available and has been reported in the *Globe and Mail*, the *Financial Post*, the *Toronto Star*, *Metro* news and *Newstalk 1010*, amongst others. By preempting the bill's progression through the House, the government has acted in a fashion that signals that the appropriate parliamentary processes are unnecessary for the completion of any deal. Again, Mr. Speaker, this bill is still before the House. We have not passed such a bill.

In 1997, a *prima facie* ruling by Speaker Stockwell regarding a document involved with government advertising, warned as follows—if you remember, Speaker, it was related to the megacity bill. The government had put out advertising—specifically, had put out a flyer—where they were talking about what was going to happen should this legislation pass.

Stockwell had this to say: He warned that “a reader of that document could be left with an incorrect impression about how parliamentary democracy works in Ontario, an impression that undermines respect for our parliamentary institutions.”

An unassuming member of the public could infer from any of the media outlets above that the distribution of Hydro One shares by the government is a foregone conclusion and not contingent on an act of the House that has yet to occur.

Erskine May explains the concept of contempt in the following terms: “Generally speaking, any act or omission which obstructs or impedes either House of Parliament in the performance of its functions, or which obstructs or impedes any member or officer of such House in the discharge of his duty, or which has a tendency”—and I say “tendency”—“directly or indirectly, to produce such results may be treated as contempt even though there is no precedent of the offence. It is therefore impossible to list every act which might be considered to amount to a contempt, the power to punish for such an offence being of its nature discretionary” to the Speaker.

“Indignities offered to the House by words spoken or writings published reflecting on its character or proceedings have been constantly punished by both the Lords and the Commons upon the principle that such acts tend to obstruct the Houses in the performance of their functions by diminishing the respect due to them....

“Other acts besides words spoken or writings published reflecting upon either House or its proceedings which, though they do not tend directly to obstruct or impede either House in the performance of its functions, yet have a tendency to produce this result indirectly or by bringing such House into odium, contempt or ridicule or

by lowering its authorities may constitute contempts,” according to Erskine May.

I finish on this: By negotiating the distribution of private shares of a public crown asset such as Ontario hydro before the Legislature of Ontario has approved the sale of such shares, the government undermines the authority of this House.

It is clear that the concerns of various speakers identified not only in Stockwell's 1997 ruling, but others, raises questions about the manner in which the government is negotiating the sale of Hydro One shares. It is for these reasons I hope that you rule in favour of a *prima facie* case of contempt and allow this House to investigate this matter fully.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I thank the member.

On the same point of privilege, the member from Leeds–Grenville.

Mr. Steve Clark: I'm pleased to respond. I received the letter from the House leader from the third party about an hour ago, and I did have a very casual conversation with him just prior to the introductions portion of question period.

I make no bones, Speaker. I've said in the past that I have serious concerns about this government undermining the 107 members of this Legislature, the fact that I believe on a number of occasions they've undermined the relevance of this Legislature.

I too share the concerns of the member from Timmins–James Bay about the decisions and the statements that this government has made outside of this House about the Hydro One share sale, the distribution of those shares and, in addition, statements that they've made outside of this point of privilege just on the sale of hydro, the sale of Hydro One Brampton—the feeling from the members of the public that these deals are all done. It really flies in the face of all of us and our parliamentary democracy that the government continues down this path without the debate that I believe is deserved.

I also agree with the member's statements around Speaker Stockwell's rulings about the impression that the public has that decisions have been made when there hasn't been that discussion in this House.

While Progressive Conservatives have not had ample time to be able to provide a written submission, we do share the road that this government is taking all Ontarians down in this sale. The fact is that we have a parliamentary place that deserves debate for those significant items of the public good, so we support this letter and this issue. We hope that you will rule in favour. I think the member's last comments about more investigation and more discussion—I hope that's the road you will put us on this morning, Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): On the same point of privilege, the government House leader.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: Thank you very much, Speaker. I respectfully ask that you dismiss this point of privilege from the honourable member from Timmins–James Bay because notice was not given at the first available opportunity.

By his own admission, the honourable member from Timmins–James Bay quotes in his letter that he has known about this for at least five days. The member quotes an article from the Toronto Star dated April 30 where the Minister of Energy, Bob Chiarelli, speaks to a tentative deal. In fact, Speaker, if you look, the earliest reporting of this issue goes back to an article in the Globe and Mail, to March 20, 2015, and the first line of that article reads as follows: “Ontario’s two main power workers’ unions could end up owning a slice of a partially privatized Hydro One.”

Speaker, I would like to quote from your ruling of April 21, 2015, where you ruled on the timing of a point of privilege:

“Yesterday, the member from Leeds–Grenville provided me with an additional written notice of intent to raise a point of privilege, as required by standing order 21(c). The notice refers to the release last week of the report of the Premier’s Advisory Council on Government Assets, and principally about the fact the announcement took place outside the Legislative Assembly and at a time that conflicted with the day’s question period.

“I have to advise the member that I cannot accept his notice. A point of privilege must be raised at the earliest opportunity after the alleged breach has occurred. Having received the member’s notice only late last night, which relates to events that occurred four days previous, I do not believe the member has met the timeline’s requirement.”

In your ruling from April 21, you found that this point of privilege had not met the timeline’s requirement. The circumstances that we are discussing today are no different. At the very least, the member for Timmins–James Bay had the opportunity to raise this point yesterday. He chose not to do so, and on this basis alone, precedent dictates that you not accept this point of privilege.

In regard to the potential point of privilege raised by the member for Timmins–James Bay, the events in question by his own admission occurred five days previous to when the notice was given. Further, just last week, the member from Nepean–Carleton asked a question on the same issue in the assembly during question period.

Because this point of privilege was not raised at the earliest opportunity, I respectfully ask that you dismiss it. Should you choose to rule on it, I would ask, given that the notice for this motion was just received earlier today, that an opportunity be provided for us to provide a more fulsome written response by the end of today that would illustrate how the potential agreement with the Power Workers’ Union does not presume passage of the budget bill and how previous Speakers’ rulings made it clear that civil servants can take reasonable planning measures in advance of the passage of the requisite legislation.

1050

Furthermore, if a deal is eventually ratified, it would of course be contingent on the Legislature passing the budget. There has been no suggestion otherwise.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The continuance: the member from Timmins–James Bay.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I just want to say—I don’t want to prolong this any longer than I have to, but I think there are a couple of points that need to be made.

First of all, we just started writing this up yesterday because it finally occurred to us through research. In fact, that’s where we got those quotes. I got them from the research. I saw that in an email in regard to the media stories sometime this weekend. It takes time to put that together.

The other thing is, I’ll remind this House, when it came to the decision in regard to the last time we got into this, in regard to the gas plant committee, that issue had been happening at committee for some time before it ever got to the House. So I don’t think arguing timelines is quite right.

The issue here is that when I found out, I started to put together a point of privilege. It takes a while, as you can be aware, to do some research. I asked my staff to go through the media clippings in order to find clippings that would indicate that in fact the government did support this particular initiative, and that’s what they found. That’s why they’re included in the letter. It’s not because I read them on that day. It’s because they actually did the research, and we wrote this particular point of privilege yesterday. Unfortunately, by 5 o’clock I went to your office and you were not there. I got there around 5 o’clock. I’m not chastising you, but it’s just the reality that you weren’t there. That’s why I immediately went to your office this morning to bring it in.

I also want to say, just on the last point, the issue here is that this Legislature has a function, and the function is to approve the budgetary process of the government and approve legislation. When a government decides to enact and to put into place what it is supposing to happen as a result of passage of legislation before the legislation is ever passed, I think it is an affront to this Legislature. That’s really what the crux of it is. I won’t repeat that, but I’m sure you understand why we raised this, and I ask you not to take into consideration the comments made by the government House leader.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): To be clear, I take all comments into consideration.

I’m going to reserve my ruling on this matter and will deliver it at a future date.

Also, I’m going to ask that the written submissions that have been referred to are delivered to me no later than 3 p.m. this afternoon.

ORAL QUESTIONS

PRIVATIZATION OF PUBLIC ASSETS

Mr. John Yakabuski: My question is for the Premier. Premier, we’ve been talking a lot lately about this upcoming sale of shares in Hydro One, but there’s been very little talk of your sale of Hydro One Brampton.

Ed Clark’s report states that a deal has already been reached with three private companies, yet your govern-

ment never publicly put Hydro One Brampton up for sale. You never even asked for a single competitive bid. Ontarians have no guarantee that they're getting maximum value for the sale of Hydro One Brampton.

Premier, if you're going to sell public assets, can you at least provide some evidence that it's being done properly?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I know the Minister of Energy is going to want to comment in the supplementaries, but I just want to be clear that I believe it is very important that we work with local distribution companies in this province. I think consolidation is something that we can agree is an important thing.

The proposed merger of Enersource, Horizon, Hydro One Brampton and PowerStream will create the second-largest distributor. This merged entity would be able to deliver efficiencies and economies of scale that would translate into savings for their respective ratepayers. That is critical.

I would just also comment on the agreement that consolidation is a good thing: The PC's white paper encouraged consolidation for "stronger utilities and lower operations, maintenance, and administrative costs." They actually are onside with this.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. John Yakubuski: I think you said you believed that the gas plant cancellation was going to be \$40 million.

Premier, when talking about alcohol sales, Ed Clark wrote, "We expressed the view that some degree of competition is always healthy..." yet when talking about the sale of hydro assets, he wrote, "The council believes that the province should not conduct an open auction or procurement process for Hydro One Brampton." It's a classic Liberal move: Say one thing, do another.

Premier, if Ed Clark states that competition is always healthy, why won't you allow a single competitive bid process on the sale of Hydro One Brampton?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Energy.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: After considerable consultation and examining the market, the council—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Order. Like yesterday, I'll jump quickly.

Carry on.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: The council's report emphasized, "This option results in a strong consolidator in the GTHA at a value that was as high as could otherwise be achieved"—and they did explore the market, Mr. Speaker. This proposed merger is a unique circumstance that presented itself, and the council was of the belief that its value could not be replicated through any alternative process.

In considering what form of strategic sale or merger to pursue, the council was influenced strongly by the importance of creating a strong, stand-alone industry consolidator.

Again, their Paths to Prosperity stated—

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

Mr. John Yakubuski: Sure, we'll just trust you on this one like we've done in the past.

Premier, you're asking Ontarians to trust you on this deal. With your track record, that's just not good enough. That's why I wrote to the Auditor General to ask her to investigate the sale of Hydro One Brampton before you remove her ability to do so in the coming weeks, with the passing of the budget bill.

We know that you like to say you're open and transparent, so now's your chance to back that up. If you truly have nothing to hide, you will support my request to let the Auditor General, with her vast experience in the energy sector, investigate the sale of Hydro One Brampton.

Interjections.

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

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Member from Dufferin—Caledon, come to order. Yes, I said that I was going to be sharp—especially when I'm standing.

Carry on.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: The transaction represents eight municipalities, some of whom are already consolidated in one form or another. The circumstances were extremely unique. Our government intends to proceed with the merger of Enersource, Horizon, Hydro One Brampton and PowerStream to ensure value for the province and to encourage local distribution company consolidation for the benefit of ratepayers.

They issued a white paper. They talked about trying to create circumstances for consolidation. They issued a white paper that asked to broaden the ownership of Hydro One and OPG. Now they're turning against themselves only to be critical, and have no positive options to offer in this House.

WINTER HIGHWAY MAINTENANCE

Mr. Michael Harris: My question is to the Premier. Premier, last week's auditor's report revealed the truth of the fatal impact of your decisions to sign cost-cutting, substandard contracts for winter road maintenance. And yet when asked yesterday, you tried to spin a tale suggesting that standards after your cost-cutting contracts were the same as before they were signed. You even tried to blame a previous government that you know full well had nothing to do with you lowering the bar on standards.

The auditor made it clear regarding your government's contract substituting outcome targets for previously long-held standards. Contractors were making it up as they went along. Previous requirements protecting the safety of Ontario motorists went right out the window when you introduced the new agreements.

Premier, this is on you. Admit it: Your cost-cutting contracts weren't the result of previous governments; they were about you and yours alone.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Transportation.

Hon. Steven Del Duca: As I said yesterday, I want to thank the member from Kitchener—Conestoga for that

question; and as I said last week when the auditor released her report, I thank her and her team for the thorough review that they've conducted into the Ministry of Transportation's winter maintenance program.

As a result of the 2013 internal review that the ministry conducted on this program, we have brought forward over 105 pieces of additional equipment, 55 pieces mostly for northern Ontario and 50 pieces for southern Ontario. We brought in 20 additional area inspectors to help enhance the oversight within the program itself.

Last week's 2015 Ontario budget included additional measures that, if passed, will help us provide more anti-icing liquid through our contractors as needed, as well as additional unique spreaders for sand and salt, both for northern areas and congested urban areas.

1100

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Michael Harris: Back to the Premier: Premier, apparently you just can't handle the truth, even after the auditor spelled it out in black and white. After years of rhetoric and doublespeak by an endless line of transportation ministers from Jim Bradley to Kathleen Wynne to Bob Chiarelli to Glen Murray, the report details a road management scheme that you passed around like a hot potato, all the while jeopardizing Ontario motorists.

Four separate ministers, and now a rookie fifth, are willing to turn their heads while contracts you signed ensured substandard maintenance on winter roads, leading to injuries and even death. You all signed these contracts. People have lost loved ones as a result. You are all implicated and yet you keep talking about a "too little, too late" review that's not even public yet.

Premier, quit the game-playing, the finger-pointing and own up to the truths the auditor has revealed.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): This will be my last reminder about this today, and that is, you use member's ridings or their titles and that's it.

Hon. Steven Del Duca: I thank the member for that question. As I also mentioned last week both in response directly to the auditor's report but also in response to questions that occurred here in the Legislature, amongst all of the eight recommendations and all of the background information that the auditor provided—and, by the way, the Ministry of Transportation and I, as Minister of Transportation, accept all eight of the auditor's recommendations. We'll be moving forward to make sure that we continue to provide the service that's required.

But amongst all of those recommendations, the auditor did acknowledge that the province of Ontario, for the last 13 years, has consistently ranked first or second in North America when it comes to highway safety. In fact—

Interjection.

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

Hon. Steven Del Duca:—specifically in 2012, the only other jurisdiction in North America that had a better record than Ontario was the District of Columbia.

It doesn't mean that our work is done—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke, second time.

One wrap-up sentence, please.

Hon. Steven Del Duca: It doesn't mean that the work is done. That's why I said very clearly last week that I accept full responsibility for going forward. I will work with our area maintenance contractors and we will make sure the program continues to provide the service that the people of Ontario deserve.

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

Mr. Michael Harris:—the 2013 report shortly.

Premier, the fact is that the auditor report only paints part of the picture. That picture becomes darker still when you consider the fatalities that continue to mark Ontario highways while government turns the other way.

Carol Milojkovich wonders if her husband, Robert, and her son Daniel would still be alive today following a fatal collision with a transport truck on February 3 on a stretch of highway near Cornwall many considered a winter trouble spot.

Premier, we have a growing death toll, lawsuits and a damning auditor's report, and instead of apologies and action these families get platitudes to future fixes.

Premier, quit saving money on the backs of Ontario motorists. Apologize, and make damn sure your winter maintenance decisions don't jeopardize the lives of—

Interjections.

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

Mr. Michael Harris: Withdraw.

Hon. Steven Del Duca: Speaker, when I spoke last week in response to the auditor's report I did say—and I'll repeat it here this morning—that every single day of the week I use Ontario's highways, as does my wife. Very often both of our young daughters are in the car with us. I know that many on all sides of this House do the exact same thing. I feel a profound sense of responsibility with respect to making sure that, going forward, we continue to bring the improvements that are required to the winter maintenance program to provide, as I said earlier, that level of service that the people of Ontario deserve.

I should also say that I have specifically written to the auditor with respect to asking her to come back in at the end of the next winter season—at the end of winter 2015-16—to provide the Ministry of Transportation, the media and the public at large with an update with respect to our progress. That's real accountability. We're going to keep working on this program, and we'll have that report next year.

PRIVATIZATION OF PUBLIC ASSETS

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is for the Premier. The Premier is selling off Hydro One without even asking Ontarians what they think. Instead of hearing from them as part of the budget process, she's keeping everything on lockdown here in Toronto.

Why isn't the Premier interested in hearing from people across Ontario about her decision to sell off their Hydro One?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: As I remarked yesterday, we are having more hearings on our budget than the history of the other two parties would demonstrate. We've increased the number of days of hearings. I think the member opposite knows that people from around the province can delegate to the budget committee. They can provide information. Either in written form or in person, they can provide information.

Quite the opposite of what the member opposite is suggesting, we are interested in hearing from people on the plan that we have put forward in the budget—a plan, I might say, we ran on, and we have put into our budget. We ran on reviewing our assets.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: While the Premier won't listen to Ontarians, we know she will listen to high-priced consultants about what they think about selling Hydro One. While she has paid nearly \$7 million to high-priced consultants, she won't tell Ontarians what they gave her in terms of advice.

I think there are some other people she should be consulting with: the people who actually own Hydro One and the people who pay the bills. This might surprise the Premier, but Hydro One doesn't belong to the Liberal Party; it belongs to Ontarians.

Can the Premier explain why it is that she paid \$7 million to get advice from Bay Street consulting firms, but she won't consult with the people of Ontario about the sale of their Hydro One?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Once again, let me just challenge the leader of the third party by reminding her that there has been a proposal presented to both opposition House leaders that would increase the standard for committee consideration to six days. Let's remember that when their party was in office, in 1991 and 1992 there was one day of committee hearings. Under the PCs, from 1996 to 2002—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Simcoe North will come to order; second time.

Carry on.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: In 1996, two days of hearings; in 1997, two days; in 2000, two days; in 2002, zero days of committee hearings. The fact is, we are going to be hearing from the people of Ontario.

But Mr. Speaker, to the point about having experts give us advice, it was a complicated process, and we did have—

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Six days is not enough time for Ontarians to have their say on one of the biggest public policy decisions that has come through this chamber in a decade or more. It is not right, Speaker. It is wrong. She is treating the sell-off of Hydro One like it is

a done deal; that's what the point of privilege was about this morning.

To those of you on the backbenches, you just have to remember this: It is you who is going to have to go to your constituents and explain why your Premier is putting this through the Legislature without talking—

Interjections.

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

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Not now, member from Lambton–Kent–Middlesex.

As part of the convention, if comments and questions are put to the Speaker, we tend not to have this.

Please finish.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: It's not just me saying this. Almost 25,000 Ontarians have sent a message to the Premier through our website. Even Liberal riding activists are launching campaigns to stop their very own Premier from this wrong-headed decision.

Can she explain to Ontario families why it is that she will not take the time to listen to them and give them the respect they deserve?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: What I will say to the leader of the third party and to the people of Ontario is that we—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Member from Hamilton East–Stoney Creek.

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Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: —are very interested in their comments. I am very interested in hearing from them, as we did in pre-budget hearings around the province. I'm very interested in hearing their responses on the budget, which is why we have increased the number of days that we would like to have post-budget hearings.

But a couple of things that the leader of the third party has said are very indicative of what she's trying to do at this moment. The fact is, on this side of the House, we have had very clear discussions in the leadup to the budget about what was in that budget. We are a team that has taken this budget to the people of the province. It may be that the way the third party works is that it's a one-woman show. That's not how it works over here. We actually have a combined approach that—

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

Interjections.

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

Start the clock. New question.

PRIVATIZATION OF PUBLIC ASSETS

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My next question is for the Premier. The Premier says that selling Hydro One is the only way to pay for transit and infrastructure, but she's just given away the very first shares in Hydro One, and it won't put a nickel into infrastructure or transit. The Pre-

mier says that selling off Hydro One is the only way. New Democrats say it is the wrong way.

The Premier does have other options but she refuses to look at them: things like corporate taxes, things like closing HST loopholes or keeping the billions of dollars—

Interjections.

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

The Minister of Energy, come to order; the Minister of Economic Development, the member from Trinity–Spadina.

I'm catching up. You can laugh all you want. I do know who is.

Please finish.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: —or keeping the billions of dollars in long-term, stable revenue that Hydro One brings to fund all of our services here in this province.

The Premier says selling Hydro One is the only choice, but she is glossing over the fact that it will pay for only 3% of her \$130 billion in promises.

Will the Premier explain why it is she's ramming through a plan to sell Hydro One, a plan that isn't needed for transit and infrastructure but does leave families paying the price?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Let's just be clear that what the leader of the third party wants to do now is once again block the implementation of a budget that would build new transit, that would continue to reduce auto rates, that would continue to implement an Ontario Retirement Pension Plan. She's not interested in doing any of those things.

She's not putting a plan forward for how she would make the investments in infrastructure—\$130 billion over 10 years—and she knows perfectly well that in order to make that investment, there are a number of things that we have to do. She knows perfectly well that we have allocated HST and gas tax to put towards those investments. She knows perfectly well that the opening of ownership of Hydro One is only one part of that plan, and it is a plan to make investments that she is apparently not interested in making.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The Premier does not have a mandate to sell Hydro One, and that is the bottom line. She does not have a good reason to sell Hydro One. Sure, it will make a handful of high-paid consultants, Bay Street bankers and Liberal insiders very, very rich, but it will leave families—

Interjections.

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: —paying higher bills for generations to come. The Premier didn't give people a say on this during the election because no matter how hard she protests, she didn't run on it and everybody knows it.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): There is some back and forth going on while a question is being put by members of that side, and there are members, while the answer is being put, dialoguing and trying to egg each other

on. I get it. I hope you get it that it's not supposed to happen.

Did you wrap up? Please.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: No matter how hard she protests, she knows darn well she did not run on this plan. Everybody knows it. Now she's ramming it through the House.

Why is the Premier ramming through a plan that's bad for Ontarians without even asking them what they think?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I would say to the leader of the third party: What is it about making investments in this province to the tune of \$130 billion for the next 10 years, investing in transit and transportation infrastructure, and by that I mean roads and bridges, across this province—why is it that she does not see that this is necessary to the economic health and well-being of this province?

We ran on this. We said we were going to make those investments and we said that part of our plan was to review the assets that were owned by the people of Ontario and make sure that we could leverage them to have the ability to invest in the infrastructure and the assets that are needed for the 21st century. We ran on that. She ran on that. We are implementing the plan that we ran on.

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: What is it about actually getting a mandate from the people in a democracy that this Premier does not understand? The Premier did not get a mandate to sell off Hydro One. That is the truth—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock. There are a few people who are on two.

Please finish.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: And the sad thing is, now that she has an opportunity to get input through the committee process, instead she's going to ram it through the House. She is not interested in what people have to say. Instead, she is pushing for a privatization agenda that is worse than what we saw with Ernie Eves and Mike Harris.

Will the Premier stop listening to bankers, stop listening—

Interjections.

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Will the Premier stop listening to bankers, stop listening to high-paid consultants, stop listening to Liberal insiders and start listening to the people of Ontario and give them a chance to have their say and put a stop to—

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

Interjections.

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

Premier?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Let me just remind the leader of the third party of the text of our 2014 budget: “The government will look at maximizing and unlocking value from assets it currently holds, including real estate holdings as well as crown corporations such as Ontario

Power Generation, Hydro One and the Liquor Control Board of Ontario.”

We said in our 2014 platform: “Our Moving Ontario Forward plan includes a balanced and responsible approach to paying for these investments. The funds will be dedicated from sources of revenue.” Asset optimization we pegged at \$3.15 billion or 10.9%. That’s what we ran on.

But underlying that was a plan to make the investments that we know are needed in this province that will allow this economy to grow. She doesn’t want to talk to experts. The leader of the third party is not interested in—

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

CORRECTIONAL FACILITIES

Mr. Rick Nicholls: My question is to the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services. We have known for over a year that your ministry has been gearing up for a strike. You started building strike accommodations 10 months before the corrections contracts had even ended, a clear sign that you aren’t planning to bargain in good faith.

This past week, we learned that those buildings cost \$5.8 million. For a government that is selling everything they can to pay their debts, that money could have gone a long way elsewhere.

Almost every ministry is slashing front-line services. Minister, bargain in good faith. Wouldn’t that \$5.8 million have been better spent on correctional front-line services?

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Hon. Yasir Naqvi: I thank the member opposite for asking the question. I am sure, also, that the member opposite knows that when it comes to matters dealing with collective bargaining, it would be highly inappropriate for anybody in this House to speak to that.

I think that we on this side of the House firmly believe that the best place for bargaining to take place is at the table between our labour partners and management, and I really urge the member that we should not interfere in that bargaining process. I have the utmost respect for the process. I know that negotiations are ongoing, and I will not interfere in those negotiations.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

Mr. Rick Nicholls: Well, Minister, I’m not so certain that I really got an answer to this.

That \$5.8 million was spent 10 months before contracts even ended. Meanwhile, you allowed new superjails in Toronto and Windsor to operate for a year without infirmaries, while facilities like the Elgin-Middlesex Detention Centre are overcrowded and understaffed.

This is inexcusable, yet you would rather pour—

Interruption.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock. I would ask that the crowd not engage in any activities that

are disruptive to the House. Sergeant-at-Arms—okay? Thank you.

Mr. Rick Nicholls: Thank you, Speaker.

So we were talking about operating for a year without infirmaries, while facilities like the Elgin-Middlesex Detention Centre are overcrowded and understaffed. It’s inexcusable, yet you would rather pour millions into preparing for a strike that may not happen.

Maybe you had the foresight that students across the province would be out of the classroom because your colleague refuses to negotiate; the foresight that correctional institutions would strike next. Clearly, Minister, you have no hope of getting a deal done.

Minister, is that \$5.8 million part of your net-zero deals or—

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

Minister?

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: Again, I would restate that we respect the collective bargaining process, and we let the bargaining take place at the table between our labour partners and management. I think that it’s not appropriate for any member to engage in that process here in the House.

Also, I want to note the fact that our number one priority is the health and safety of our correctional staff and of the inmates. When you are engaged in collective bargaining and dealing with places like our correctional institutions, it would be highly irresponsible for any government not to engage in some planning ahead of time, to ensure that the health and safety of all correctional staff and inmates is protected at all times.

PRIVATIZATION OF PUBLIC ASSETS

Mr. Peter Tabuns: My question is to the Premier. The Premier hasn’t even passed her budget bill yet, but she’s already handing away shares of Hydro One worth tens of millions of dollars a year and hundreds of millions of dollars over the lifetime of that deal, all without ever asking Ontarians.

The Premier promised that all the money from Hydro One would go to transit and infrastructure, but those hundreds of millions of dollars that the Premier is giving away won’t build any bridges, won’t pave any roads, won’t dig any subway tunnels—and she’s doing it all before a budget has even been passed.

Does the Premier think that her decisions trump the will of the Legislature?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Energy.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: The critic for the NDP knows, in fact, that there is a tentative agreement, and that we cannot discuss or disclose those details until there has been a ratification vote.

But it’s time. The GTA has the worst congestion of any municipal area in the world. The city of Hamilton needs funding for its rapid transit. Rural communities have been asking to expand natural gas. The proceeds of sharing ownership of Hydro One will be invested in

infrastructure, and in that process, we're respecting the interests of the ratepayers.

Mr. Speaker, they have no plan of any nature or kind, other than—they admitted today—that they are going to tax to pay for infrastructure. We'll tell the province that they are going to tax for infrastructure. We are going to repurpose our—

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

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Quite a performance.

Selling Hydro One is the wrong decision. It means that bills will go up and that families will pay the price. Handing away shares will cost hundreds of millions of dollars over the lifetime of the Premier's scheme. That's hundreds of millions of dollars not going to transit or infrastructure that the minister just spoke about. The Premier is handing away hundreds of millions of dollars in Hydro One shares before the budget has even been passed.

Can the Premier explain why she doesn't seem to care about what people have to say or even waiting until the budget has been to committee, let alone passed?

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: The opposition continues to say that the ratepayer will pay. We just heard that again. The member knows that the Ontario Energy Board approves all prices that consumers will pay. In fact, there is a record before us, over the last six or seven years, where the Ontario Energy Board has in fact reduced requests from the existing Hydro One, from Ontario Power Generation—reduced them or, in fact, given them less than they've asked for. It is a process that was established and that was used by all previous governments. They'll continue to be in place for this Hydro One and the next Hydro One, and OPG and everybody else who applies for rate increases.

They refuse to accept that. They continue to say that it's going to raise prices for the ratepayers. It's not true; it's bull.

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

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: Withdraw, Speaker.

MIDWIFERY

Mr. Yvan Baker: My question is for the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. Yesterday my sister, Meelena, gave birth to a daughter. Mother and daughter are healthy—and my brother-in-law, Joel. My parents, Don and Myroslava, are thrilled to be grandparents.

Having seen what my sister has gone through over the past nine months, I know how important it is that women have the support that they need to ensure that they and their children are healthy. Very appropriately, today marks International Day of the Midwife. It's a day to celebrate midwifery and reflect on the importance of midwives' work to support the health of women and babies around the world.

Here in Ontario, women and families have embraced midwifery since it was regulated in 1994, and the profes-

sion is growing in response to that demand. This spring, we will see the largest ever class of graduates from the Midwifery Education Program. There are about 760 registered midwives and 30 aboriginal midwives.

Minister, what is our government doing to support the important work being done by midwives across Ontario?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: Today is International Day of the Midwife, and I want to take this opportunity to thank Ontario's more than 700 midwives practising in 100 clinics throughout the province for the incredible work that you do as a vital part of Ontario's health care team.

But today, I want to specifically thank Katrina Kilroy, Sarah Knox and Tiffany Haidon, the three midwives from the Midwives Collective of Toronto, who were responsible for bringing my son, Rhys, who will be 10 in a week's time, into this world. You see, my wife, Sam, and I—both of us being medical doctors—decided to have a home birth, one of the truly best decisions we have ever made. Of course, with two midwives attending our son's birth, I was relegated to the role of coach and water bearer, and calming the family dog, who was quite upset at the whole commotion. The sheer joy of being able to deliver Rhys at home in a familiar environment and bring him into this world, guided by the professionalism and compassion of talented midwives, is something we will never forget.

Mr. Yvan Baker: Thank you, Minister. I'm happy to hear about the great investments our government is making in midwifery in Ontario. I know that midwifery services are offered at 71 hospitals in Ontario, and birthing centres were launched in both Toronto and Ottawa recently. Our government has taken great steps in advancing midwifery in Ontario, but I know also that there is more work to be done. Our government continues to transform our health care system in the province, and I know this transformation is a key element of the 2015 budget.

Minister, could you talk about the 2015 budget commitments and the future investment in midwives in Ontario?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: Ontario became the first jurisdiction in Canada to regulate midwifery. Since that time, Ontario's midwives have attended more than 180,000 births, including 35,000 home births. Since our government came into office in 2003, funding for the midwifery program has increased more than fivefold, from \$21 million to \$134 million in the last fiscal year. These investments have led to the doubling of the number of midwives in the province. Ontario has the majority of registered midwives in all of Canada.

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But the member from Etobicoke Centre is right: There is more work to be done. Together, working with the Association of Ontario Midwives, our government will be expanding our support to grow the number of aboriginal midwives in Ontario. We're serious about this commitment. We referenced it in the budget, and we look forward to launching this important program in the coming months.

I'd like to once again thank our midwives for all of their hard work and dedication to Ontario families.

TEACHERS' LABOUR DISPUTES

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: My question today is for the Minister of Education. Minister, you have 72,000 secondary school students out of the classroom right this minute. Your two-tiered, train wreck, Bill 122 bargaining is simply not working. We have chatted with both sides, and they say there is simply nothing to bargain with.

Minister, it is really time for you to get serious. You have a responsibility to the students and to their parents. You have to show leadership and make sure those students get to attend their proms, their field trips, their sports competitions and, above all, their graduation ceremonies.

Minister, time is running out. What are your plans to get serious about this mess, a mess that has been created by 12 years of Liberal mismanagement?

Hon. Liz Sandals: I just want to repeat that, of course, we know that we need to reach a negotiated settlement, and we remain quite willing to be at the table and to do just that.

But the member asked a question about what we are doing to support the students whose teachers are on strike. In fact, one of the concerns that we had was around the highest-needs, very vulnerable special-education children. So that the kids would have supports in place from agencies on March break and summer holidays and—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member for Dufferin—Caledon, second time.

Hon. Liz Sandals: —we've been working very carefully with MCYS, with Minister MacCharles and with the agencies that support her in each of the three areas where there's a strike to make sure that the highest-needs, most vulnerable students have that support in place during the strike.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Leeds—Grenville will come to order.

Supplementary.

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: I asked you to get serious. Minister, next Monday, Halton, Lakehead, Ottawa and Waterloo boards will likely all be out as well. That's another 51,000 students who will not be in the classroom because of your Bill 122; we call it the two-tiered train wreck of a bargaining system.

On top of that, we know that it's highly unlikely that 817,000 elementary students will be impacted negatively, beginning next Monday. This is a total of 950,000 students. The system is in turmoil, and it's broken. Your ministry has no one to blame except yourself for this mess.

Minister, when are you going to step up, show leadership and make sure our students are receiving the education they paid for and that they deserve?

Hon. Liz Sandals: Just going back to what we are doing to support students, because that was the original question, my ministry has been working very carefully with Minister Moridi's ministry, TCU, and with the university and college application centres. In all the boards where kids are out because of a strike, before the strike, the interim marks were submitted. The application process is going on.

Of course we want our kids back in school, and we will work very hard at the bargaining table to make that happen. But I'm not taking any lessons from the people who said they would get rid of 22,700 education workers.

TEACHERS' LABOUR DISPUTES

Ms. Cindy Forster: My question is to the Premier. Secondary educators in Peel, Rainbow and Durham school districts are now on strike. The Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario's members are poised to begin their job action on Monday. Meanwhile, the Premier and the Minister of Education have flip-flopped on their commitment to cap class sizes. I don't understand why the Minister of Education is perplexed about why job action is happening.

Will the Premier admit that this government's reckless cuts are making a mess of our education system?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: To the Minister of Education.

Hon. Liz Sandals: I think we need a little bit of clarity here: The caps that she's talking about, the class size caps, are in fact contained in the local collective agreements. That isn't what we would necessarily be talking about at the central table. The issue is around the local caps that are in local collective agreements.

I must say, as somebody who was a trustee for years and years and years and who actually has sat on a staffing allocation committee at secondary, caps often apply in the case of tech classes; they often apply in the cases of other courses where there's health and safety, where there's an issue in a science lab around the maximum number of seats in a lab. There are lots of caps that are very, very helpful, and I support those.

What isn't very helpful is when—

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

Ms. Cindy Forster: The fact is that you're actually increasing those caps.

We know that central talks have broken down with secondary teachers, forcing tens of thousands of students out of schools. The minister has repeated over and over that these are local issues. We've also heard that she admits that she bears the responsibility of the central negotiating table. Some 73,000 elementary teachers will be in a legal strike position on Monday, affecting over 800,000 students across the province who are worried that they're going to lose their school year. It's clear that it's not just a local issue, Minister.

Will the Premier stop dodging the responsibility and admit that Liberals are throwing schools into chaos, forcing students, teachers and parents to pay the price?

Hon. Liz Sandals: I'm always fascinated to learn from the opposition what apparently it is that I'm trying to negotiate. It's really quite interesting to find out what it is that I am or am not doing.

But what I do want to say is that obviously we are quite concerned about the situation with the elementary teachers. Once again, we understand that we need to get back to the bargaining table. We need to negotiate a settlement because we too want to avoid strikes.

WORKPLACE SAFETY

Mr. Peter Z. Milczyn: My question is for the Minister of Labour. This week marks North American Occupational Safety and Health Week. It also happens to be the time of year when many young Ontarians go out and get their first job and work over the summer.

In my riding of Etobicoke–Lakeshore, hundreds of Humber College students are completing their semester and they're eager to go out and start their summer job working in retail, in restaurants, on construction sites—wherever they've found employment—and get that first paycheque.

These new and young workers are often inexperienced and they're very eager to please their employers and get that paycheque in their hands. However, it's troubling that statistics show that young people are three times more likely to be injured in the first three months on the job than their more experienced colleagues.

Through you to the minister, what can we do to ensure that our youngest and least-experienced Ontarians are safe at work?

Hon. Kevin Daniel Flynn: Thank you to the member from Etobicoke–Lakeshore for what I think is an excellent question. We're always saddened in this House when we hear about workplace injuries and fatalities. Our sincere condolences go out to those families that have been affected in this way. Most often the sad part is that these incidents that lead to the injury or the death are preventable or avoidable. It's something we need to do something about.

We launched our annual new and young worker health and safety blitz earlier this month to ensure that employers in this province and new employees alike understand the rights they have and the obligations they have under the law.

But today I'm appealing to members of this House, as parents and grandparents as well as elected officials: Please talk to the young people you have an impact on. We need everyone to play a role in keeping workplaces in Ontario safe and making sure that these people make safety a habit throughout their entire career.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Peter Z. Milczyn: I want to thank the minister for that answer.

It's encouraging to know that ministry staff are proactively inspecting workplaces that employ new and young workers during their annual safety blitz. I think it's important to show our young people that this govern-

ment cares about their well-being. But it's just not feasible to expect ministry staff to make it out to each and every workplace.

The tagline for North American Occupational Safety and Health Week is "Make Safety a Habit for Your Career."

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Speaker, through you to the minister: What is the government doing to ensure that all new and young workers have an understanding of their basic health and safety rights so that they can begin to forge those safety habits earlier in their working life?

Hon. Kevin Daniel Flynn: Thank you for the supplementary.

I want to reiterate that this government takes worker health and safety very, very seriously. It's a top priority. It's important that new and young workers in this province understand the fact that, under the law, if they're asked to do something that they feel is unsafe, they have the right to refuse to do that until they get more information, until they get more experience, until they learn about what they're being asked to do. They need to know that they have that right as an Ontarian without any fear of reprisal if they're feeling like they're being put in an unsafe situation.

We brought in a new regulation that requires all workers and supervisors in Ontario to complete basic entry-level health and safety training. What it does is it outlines the duties they have, the responsibilities they have, because we know that there's a shared responsibility for workplace safety. On completion of the training, these workers have a basic understanding that I think is going to serve them well in their careers.

LONG-TERM CARE

Mr. Jim Wilson: My question is for the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. Minister, my constituent Mr. Jim Lees is waiting for a long-term-care bed. While he waits, the community care access centre moved Mr. Lees from the hospital to a retirement home that even the CCAC has noted is not the right facility for him, not to mention that the family has paid over \$14,000 for six weeks of care so far in that facility.

On Friday, the CCAC finally agreed to provide personal support care until a nursing home is found, but that still doesn't solve the problem, and it leaves the family paying thousands of dollars more a month than they would if Mr. Lees was in a nursing home.

Minister, Mr. Lees is not alone. This is a problem right across Ontario, and yet your government continues to do nothing about it. Will you help Mr. Lees, or is this yet another example of the health care system we can expect from this government?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: To the Associate Minister of Health.

Hon. Dipika Damerla: I want to begin by thanking the member opposite for bringing his constituent's concern to my attention. I also want to offer my sympathies to the family.

I also want to say to the member that, as he knows, I cannot speak to the specifics of any individual case, but I'm happy to talk with you outside and after question period about the issue. I also know that my staff has been in touch, and, as you mentioned, the CCAC is providing some of the care that the constituent is looking for.

But what I can do is reassure the member that in every circumstance where an Ontarian needs urgent care or placement in a long-term-care home, these individuals are placed in the highest-priority category for that placement. The member knows that we're investing strongly in the long-term-care sector.

In fact, in this year's budget, funding for resident care needs increased by an additional 2%. This builds on substantial funding increases our government has made in long-term-care funding for long-term-care—

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

Mr. Jim Wilson: Back to the minister: Minister, the problem is—and you have not addressed it in your response—you haven't built a new nursing home bed or long-term-care bed in the last 12 years in this province. We built 20,000 during the eight years that we were in office. You haven't put out one new licence for one new bed. It's a crisis out there. Not everyone can stay at home.

In this case, Mr. Lees gets kicked out of the hospital and put into a retirement home. They can't look after him. They can't meet his needs. You're not doing anything about it. We've contacted your office for weeks and weeks and weeks now, and I've written four letters on this. He'll spend another \$4,000 that the family can't afford just in the next month alone.

When are you going to build some new beds and alleviate the problem out there right across the province? Mr. Lees is just one. You're going to bankrupt this family. You're killing them emotionally. This is a senior couple that grew up in Canada expecting the care that they should get in Canada and in Ontario, and you're failing them miserably.

Interjections.

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

Associate Minister.

Hon. Dipika Damerla: Again, I'd like to remind the member that I can't speak to the specifics of this case, but I want to reassure him that in every case where urgent placement is required for long-term-care residents, that does take place, and the CCAC works very hard.

I also want to point out that wait times for long-term-care homes have actually decreased from 190 days in 2008-09 down to 116 days in 2013-14.

My goal, and this government's goal, is to continue to drive investments into long-term-care homes. As—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Wrap up, please.

Hon. Dipika Damerla: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As I was saying, we continue to invest in long-term-care homes, but we also continue to invest in the continuum of care, as shown by the 5% increase in community care.

I look forward to working with the member opposite, and I'm committed to making sure that seniors will receive long-term care.

FIRST RESPONDERS

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: My question is to the Premier. Members of CUPE paramedics are here today to once again draw attention—in fact, to seek help from the law-makers in this chamber for the post-traumatic stress disorders their members experience on the job.

We're only too happy to acknowledge the work they do, just not the toll that work can take on them. For eight years—and again last week, for First Responders Day—we've asked this government to take action.

So once again I ask the Premier: Will you make PTSD a presumed workplace injury for first responders experiencing PTSD?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Labour.

Hon. Kevin Daniel Flynn: Thank you to the member from Parkdale–High Park for the courtesy she has extended me on this very important issue, for the interest she has shown and for the advocacy that she brings to this issue.

I would also like to take this opportunity to thank CUPE and the paramedics who are here with us today for the excellent breakfast this morning. They gave a very, very clear presentation on the importance of PTSD and on the importance of moving ahead on this issue.

I'm pleased to report that there are a number of people in Ontario who are weighing in to this debate and weighing in to this issue, asking this government to do more than it's doing, asking the WSIB to do more than it's doing.

I'm extremely interested in this issue and extremely interested in working with the member from Parkdale–High Park. I think this is an issue that all Ontarians think we owe the people who put their lives on the line every day. We owe them better on PTSD, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: Again to the Premier, it's not hard to figure out what needs to be done. For eight years—I emphasize that, Mr. Speaker; eight years—there has been legislation introduced that would recognize PTSD as a workplace injury for first responders in WSIB coverage. That's what our first responders are asking for. The bill for the breakfast is due.

When we call 911, we expect first responders to be at our door in minutes, yet when they need help, we wait years to answer their call. While this government has dithered, 17 first responders have killed themselves. How many more have to die?

Again, the answer to the question is a simple one. Will the minister act today to have PTSD recognized in WSIB legislation for first responders?

Interjections.

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

Minister of Labour.

Hon. Kevin Daniel Flynn: Thank you to the member from Parkdale–High Park for the supplementary. Today, the current situation is that the WSIB provides compensation for people who suffer traumatic mental stress where there's a clear link between one acute incident or a series of acute incidents at work or because of injury or illness. What the member is asking for is an improvement to that system. It's one we take very, very seriously.

What people have told us, including CUPE and the paramedics and the first responders, is that things are done differently in British Columbia; things are done differently in Alberta. What we have done is sent people out to those provinces. We've taken a very good examination of how it's done in the other provinces to see if that should apply to the province of Ontario. We're very close, I think, to the end of that research, Speaker, where I will be able to bring some information back to my colleagues in the House.

Once again, we're committed to this issue. We believe we can do better. I think all members of this House would agree with that as well.

SEXUAL VIOLENCE AND HARASSMENT

Ms. Daiene Vernile: My question is for the minister responsible for women's issues. Every May, people in Ontario recognize Sexual Assault Prevention Month. It's a way of bringing awareness to the devastating effects of sexual violence.

Around the world, we are seeing societies acting on the momentum for change and the need for the violence to end. People want to see action to stop sexual violence, and we need to support the survivors. They want this issue brought out of the shadows so that the old attitudes and stereotypes are eliminated.

1150

Mr. Speaker, for Sexual Assault Prevention Month, can the minister please inform this House what Ontario is doing to stop sexual violence?

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: First, I'd like to acknowledge the hard work of the member from Kitchener Centre as the chair of the Select Committee on Sexual Violence and Harassment, and all the members on that committee. Thank you.

As the member said, it is Sexual Assault Prevention Month, and this gives a tremendous opportunity to teachers, nurses and doctors, sexual assault centres and women's shelters, all advocates and many more to inform others of services for victims. They dispel myths surrounding sexual assault and bring a focus on how important it is to end sexual violence and harassment.

I'm very proud that this year our government is joining them with our bold action plan to stop sexual violence and harassment called It's Never Okay, and our provocative new ad asking everyday bystanders #WhoWillYouHelp challenges the myth that sexual assault is not your business. Mr. Speaker, it is absolutely everybody's business.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Daiene Vernile: I would like to thank the minister for her answer. It's so important to see that we are recognizing such a very pervasive problem in our society and we're addressing it head on, and that is leadership that people in Ontario can count on.

I'm also glad to hear that there will be additional investments in sexual assault centres across the province, and as the minister mentioned, as the chair of the Select Committee on Sexual Violence and Harassment, we're certainly hearing that from the presenters who are appearing before us.

Supporting those who are on the front lines, helping both female and male victims of sexual violence, is going to mean that survivors can get the care and the attention that they need, and that is what they are telling us they need and want.

Mr. Speaker, could the minister please highlight other ways that our government is confronting sexual violence with its action plan?

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: We have over 42 sexual assault centres across this province, and I'm very proud that our Premier and Minister Jeff Leal marked the start of Sexual Assault Prevention Month just last week at the Kawartha Sexual Assault Centre.

We know that sexual violence is a societal issue that's been with us far too long, and if we only focus on deterrence, we won't seed the generational change that's needed to end sexual violence in Ontario. That's why, under our \$41-million Action Plan to Stop Sexual Violence and Harassment, we focus on teaching our next generation about consent and healthy relationships.

This is a very forward-looking effort that will teach respectful behaviours and we hope will have lasting effect on the safety and security of all of our citizens.

HYDRO RATES

Mr. Toby Barrett: My question is to the Premier. I received an urgent call from a plant manager in my riding. He has to compete with US industry paying 3 cents a kilowatt hour, and he predicts that unless something changes, his plant will close in two years. He also tells me that if nothing changes, other businesses will head south. These are examples from just one town in my riding.

One of the basic principles of business is to make a profit, but Ontario now has the highest electricity rates in North America. Businesses cannot afford these rates.

Premier, why will you not change your hydro policy to encourage not only this small company but other companies to remain in the province of Ontario?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Energy.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: I appreciate the question, and the first part of my response is to indicate to the member that I'd be happy to meet, or have my staff meet, with this particular business person.

As you may be aware, I've arranged meetings with other members of your caucus, and we've been able to

introduce business people to the programs that we do have, which can be very helpful. They range from the Industrial Electricity Incentive Program for those who are new or expanding; the ICI program can reduce up to 25%.

All of the LDCs across the province have conservation programs which enable very, very significant savings, and there are programs to help fund those initiatives. We have Home Depot, Canadian Tire Centre in Ottawa, Tim Hortons across the province—

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

Mr. Toby Barrett: It's not helping, down my way. In Haldimand and in Caledonia, over nine years, this government has destroyed our home-building economy. In Norfolk, you've destroyed much of our legal tobacco industry. You've destroyed OPG Nanticoke, and you've tripled the top-end cost of electricity—16 cents a kilowatt hour. When we were in government, it was 4.3 cents.

My local companies are being lured by North Carolina. They're being induced by Michigan, Ohio, New York State—all these inducements are on the table. They come and visit. I've heard this from a number of companies, even before the latest electricity hike. Now it's accelerated—again, all of this, just in my riding.

Premier, why will you not consider a dramatic reversal of your disastrous electricity policies?

Interjections.

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

Minister of Energy.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: Minister of Economic Development, Employment and Infrastructure.

Hon. Brad Duguid: I wanted to help out here by giving the member an idea of how he can help businesses like that particular business, and businesses right across this province. What that member can do is support our budget—our budget, that, for businesses like that, is extending for 10 years the number one program that our business community asked for, and that's to provide them with incentives to invest in capital, to invest in upgrading their machinery, to invest in their buildings. He can support our budget, which is providing \$130 billion over the next—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): It is never too late to have somebody named.

Finish, please.

Hon. Brad Duguid: The member could support our budget, which is going to be investing \$130 billion over the next 10 years, supporting 110,000 to 150,000 jobs every year.

He should have supported—and maybe he can go back on this—the Southwestern Ontario Development Fund, which is creating tens of thousands of jobs in southwestern Ontario.

VISITOR

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): In the east members' gallery, from the riding of Haliburton–Kawartha

Lakes–Brock in the 39th parliament, we have Mr. Rick Johnson visiting—a former member.

CORRECTION OF RECORD

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

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: I want a correction on what I might have said to the Minister of Education earlier.

I believe I said that “it's highly unlikely that 817,000 elementary students...” I should have said “it's highly likely.” That's what I meant. Thank you.

VISITORS

Hon. Charles Sousa: Mr. Speaker, I beg your indulgence. I have an important constituent who just recently arrived in this House. Please welcome to the Legislature my youngest daughter, Jessica, who is in the members' gallery. Welcome to this House.

Hon. Mitzie Hunter: I have some special guests I'd like to introduce. I'd like to welcome Fraser Davison, Karthik Ramanathan and Pratyusha Mohan, who are visiting us from the United Kingdom today.

I'd also like to welcome the mother and father of my page, Mr. and Mrs. Tiwari.

Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde: I'd like to welcome to the Legislature two of my constituents of Ottawa–Orléans who are here today with the Ontario Paramedic Association. I would like to welcome Andrew Phillips and Norm Robillard.

Hon. Jeff Leal: In the members' east gallery today, I'd like to introduce my intern, a native from Cobourg, Ontario, Dan Quesada, who will be working with me over the next months ahead.

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

The House recessed from 1159 to 1500.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Ms. Sophie Kiwala: I'm absolutely thrilled to introduce four midwives joining us today: Bridget Lynch and Jay MacGillivray, two of Canada's very first registered midwives, Sara Wolfe and Diane Simon. I welcome you. Thank you.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

LIBERATION OF THE NETHERLANDS

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I'm pleased to rise today to celebrate Netherlands Liberation Day. Seventy years ago, at the end of the Second World War, brave soldiers liberated the Netherlands and many of them came from

right here in Canada. The Canadian Armed Forces gave my parents and our country back our freedom.

I remember my mother's stories of the jubilation when the soldiers entered the village. Those Canadian soldiers are the reason that my family later came to Canada. And those soldiers are the reason that Canada and the Netherlands have such a strong friendship to this day. The people of the Netherlands still remember the sacrifices our Canadian soldiers made. Young people in Holland grow up hearing the stories to this day, and come out to parades and events to honour the Canadian Armed Forces.

Every year on May 5 the Netherlands celebrates Liberation Day. It's a celebration of freedom and all of those who put their lives on the line to help a nation. It's also the reason that Ontarians celebrate Dutch Heritage Month every May. This year is even more special as we celebrate the 70th anniversary of the liberation.

On the weekend, I was honoured to walk in the veterans' parade with Netherlands Consul General Anne Gerard van Leeuwen. It was part of the festival that saw thousands come out to celebrate the veterans and all those who liberated our country.

As a Dutch Canadian and a person born liberated because of their efforts, I want to say to those veterans:

Remarks in Dutch.

Thank you. We will always be indebted to you.

CHILDREN'S MENTAL HEALTH

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: Speaker, I rise today to draw our attention to Children's Mental Health Week in Ontario. The reason we mark this important week is to promote awareness of the signs of child and youth mental health difficulties while seeking to decrease the stigma associated with mental health problems.

The fact is that one in five children struggle with mental health problems. That translates to more than 500,000 children in Ontario alone. Our children need to know that mental health problems can happen to anyone, regardless of age or circumstances. In fact, 70% of mental health problems and illnesses have their onset during childhood or adolescence.

The good news is that mental health issues can be managed and overcome. The sooner we can get our children help, the quicker they can begin to heal. My concern is that while mental illnesses constitutes more than 15% of the disease burden in Canada, these illnesses receive only 5.5% of our health care dollars.

I want to acknowledge the parents, volunteers and mental health service providers, particularly Children's Mental Health Ontario, for their tireless efforts to improve the lives of Ontario's children and youth.

Lastly, I want to let our children suffering from mental health problems know that we care and support you every step of the way through this difficult journey.

MIDWIFERY

Ms. Sophie Kiwala: Mr. Speaker, today we join people from all around the world to recognize the

International Day of the Midwife. I know I speak for all of caucus when I say that all MPPs are aware of the critical role that midwives play in strengthening our community health care system and to the well-being of thousands of women and newborns in our province.

I also saw first-hand the excellent service and reassurance that midwives provided to my family when my daughter welcomed my grandson into the world on July 4, 2013. The midwife service was outstanding, not just before the birth but during it as well, and the aftercare that my daughter and her son received at their home.

Here in Ontario, there are about 760 registered midwives and 30 aboriginal midwives providing maternity care to support low-risk births. The Ontario Midwifery Program is growing by 90 registered midwives each year as new graduates enter the profession.

Ontario's midwives are a critical partner in our primary care system. Since becoming a regulated health profession in 1994, they have delivered over 150,000 babies, and 35,000 of those babies were born at home.

Working with the Association of Ontario Midwives, our government, as stated in our recent budget, will be expanding our support to grow the number of aboriginal midwives in Ontario. We look forward to that program.

I would like to sincerely thank our midwives for all of your hard work and dedication to Ontario families.

CREMATION SERVICES

Mr. Randy Hillier: I'd like to bring to the attention of the House a struggle that a constituent of mine, Dale Hilton, is having with the Ministry of Government and Consumer Services. Mr. Hilton operates a bio-cremation service that offers an eco-friendly alternative to flame-based cremation. The process he uses is approved in Quebec and Saskatchewan, as well as many US states.

However, due to the meddling of a senior ministry employee in the approvals process for this method, Mr. Hilton has been unable to provide his service to the community. What's concerning about the interference is that the ministry employee has usurped the jurisdiction of the municipality by requesting local municipal staff to withhold granting Mr. Hilton's municipal licence, which is required to start the approval process.

I don't understand why one of the ministry staff would punish and create such hardships for a small local Ontario business which is providing an environmentally friendly, widely approved method for a service whose demand is surely to increase.

This is a prime example of how the Liberal government is the single largest obstacle and impediment to permitting new technologies and new businesses to flourish in this province.

LYME DISEASE

Mr. Michael Mantha: The month of May is marked as Lyme Disease Awareness Month and a time to remember the thousands of Canadians who are affected

by Lyme disease and what we can do to help them. I have heard so many tragic stories from across Ontario of people who were unable to access necessary treatment because of how poorly we understand this disease.

Lyme disease is a significant and growing health issue across our province. Lyme disease is a tick-borne bacterial infection. Lyme-carrying ticks are on the rise across Canada, with the highest rates of human-acquired cases in Ontario. If left diagnosed and untreated, Lyme can mimic other diseases like ALS, multiple sclerosis and lupus.

I am encouraged that my motion calling for the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care to develop a comprehensive and integrated Lyme disease strategy for Ontario passed unanimously last November.

Those in the Lyme community, as well as those who are informed and concerned about Lyme disease, are eagerly waiting for an update on the progress of this strategy.

Tomorrow, many people from the Ontario Lyme Alliance, CanLyme, and the G. Magnotta Foundation for Vector-Borne Diseases, among others in the health care and veterinarian community, will be joining us here at Queen's Park to acknowledge Lyme awareness month and once again bring attention to this terrible disease and voice our concerns for a rapid implementation of the Lyme awareness prevention strategy.

May is Lyme awareness month—#RibbonsUp.

EVENTS IN OTTAWA—ORLÉANS

ÉVÉNEMENTS DIVERS À OTTAWA—ORLÉANS

Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde: On the weekend, I attended several community events.

Vendredi soir, j'avais le plaisir de féliciter la chorale Les jeunes de coeur du Centre Séraphin-Marion d'Orléans et ses 55 choristes retraités et semi-retraités pour le spectacle et leur implication dans la communauté.

Saturday afternoon, a councillor from Cumberland ward, Stephen Blais, hosted his annual ladies' tea, and I was happy to meet many members of our community.

Samedi soir fut la première édition de la Soirée Saphir, où six femmes francophones ont été reconnues pour leur apport au sein de secteurs comme le sport, l'environnement, la politique, l'éducation et les affaires.

1510

Sunday morning, I was pleased to join my colleague John Fraser at the annual Hike for Hospice, in Ottawa, at the May Court Hospice. They were raising awareness about the importance of quality end-of-life care for our aging and supporting their families through the journey.

After that, my staff, family and I spent the afternoon bowling in honour of James Osborne, who took his own life at the age of 18. His family and friends organized this third annual event to raise awareness about youth mental health and funds for a non-profit called Partners for

Mental Health. It was a truly inspiring event and a reminder to support our friends who may be struggling.

It was a wonderful weekend in Orléans, Mr. Speaker.

FIRST RESPONDERS

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Members' statements? The member from—

Mr. Todd Smith: You had no problem in question period remembering.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): You're darned right I don't have any problem—Prince Edward—Hastings.

Mr. Todd Smith: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

In the words of grade 6 student Matthew Beal, of Georges Vanier school in Belleville, "First responders in our community help all those in need every day and their importance cannot be measured. I'm grateful to each one of them that have helped my family, my friends and me."

My colleague Frank Klees, the former member for Newmarket—Aurora, passed legislation in December 2013 declaring the first day of May in honour of our paramedics, police and firefighters. They're the first on scene at most emergencies and are the professionals tasked with keeping our communities safe.

To mark the occasion, my constituency office ran a colouring and essay contest at schools across Prince Edward and Hastings counties last week. The judges, some local police and fire chiefs, had a tough job choosing our winners. On First Responders Day, on Friday, we surprised the contest winners in their classrooms with prizes for their creative pictures and their short stories. Young Mr. Beal was one of those winners.

Another award went to Julianne Wade of St. Paul's secondary, who no longer has to share the family iPad; she has one of her own now for her great essay on first responders. At Sir John A. Macdonald School, we surprised grade 2 student Daniel Power and grade 3 student Miah Hubble with gifts from the Insurance Bureau of Canada.

Acting Inspector Chris Barry of the Belleville Police Service spoke with the students about the rewarding parts of his job and encouraged the youngsters to consider becoming a first responder when they're a little bit older, because of how rewarding it is for him.

So thanks to my constituency staff and our partners in the contest at IBC. But we especially thank our first responders right across the province.

ETOBICOKE CITY CENTRE

Mr. Peter Z. Milczyn: It's a pleasure to rise in the House this afternoon to speak about the Jane's Walk that I conducted in my riding of Etobicoke—Lakeshore this past Saturday. I was joined by about 80 people to walk through what was termed the "farewell tour" for Spaghetti Junction. Mr. Speaker, Spaghetti Junction is the affectionate term for the Six Points interchange in the Etobicoke city centre in my riding—the intersection of

Dundas, Kipling and Bloor—a 1960s-era interchange in the middle of our community that was designed simply to speed traffic along at the edge of the city back then. But now it's at the heart of Etobicoke.

Over 14 years, I had the pleasure of leading an exercise to redesign, re-plan that area. The city of Toronto has begun the infrastructure work, a \$50-million project, to transform the area into a vibrant pedestrian community. Mr. Speaker, the province also is investing in this area, through some very strategic investments in public transit infrastructure. They helped fund a new entrance into Kipling subway station and soon we'll be starting a new Kipling mobility hub.

I'm very proud that this exercise has been seen as an international best practice. I was very proud to go to Harvard Graduate School of Design and deliver a lecture on this initiative. The residents that met with me this past Saturday for this tour were very happy to see the transformative change that's going to be coming to Etobicoke city centre—the result of good planning and good investments in infrastructure.

FAITH COMMUNITIES

Mr. Bob Delaney: Speaker, the first Sunday in May represents the founding anniversary of two dynamic, growing and caring faith communities in western Mississauga: the Praise Cathedral Worship Centre in Meadowvale and the Hindu Heritage Centre in Streetsville. Each celebrated its 10th anniversary in 2015; each celebrated it last Sunday, May 3.

At Praise, the congregation comes together from all across North America and the Caribbean. Featuring—without question—the premier choir in Mississauga, Praise is an experience in faith, song and joy for its growing congregation and for visitors alike.

At the Hindu Heritage Centre, Mississauga has gained a landmark temple and a Hindu congregation that has brought some of the best of Indian culture, language and tradition to Streetsville.

India's Consul General Akhilesh Mishra joined me and Mississauga–Streetsville MP Brad Butt at a flag-raising and a celebration of Indian music and dance.

Premier Kathleen Wynne attended the 10th-anniversary celebration at the Hindu Heritage Centre, along with MPPs Dipika Damerla and Amrit Mangat.

It was a very special day for the faithful in western Mississauga, and I was proud to play a part in it.

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

FINANCIAL STATEMENTS, AUDITOR GENERAL

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I beg to inform the House that, pursuant to section 28 of the Auditor General Act, I have laid upon the table the audited financial statements of the Office of the Auditor General for the year ended March 31, 2014.

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT AGENCIES

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I beg to inform the House that today the Clerk received the report on intended appointments dated May 5, 2015, of the Standing Committee on Government Agencies.

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

Report deemed adopted.

STANDING COMMITTEE ON SOCIAL POLICY

Mr. Peter Tabuns: I beg leave to present a report from the Standing Committee on Social Policy, and I move its adoption.

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

Bill 57, An Act to create a framework for pooled registered pension plans and to make consequential amendments to other Acts / *Projet de loi 57, Loi créant un cadre pour les régimes de pension agréés collectifs et apportant des modifications corrélatives à d'autres lois.*

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

Report adopted.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Pursuant to the order of the House dated April 16, 2015, the bill is ordered for third reading.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

SEXUAL ASSAULT PREVENTION MONTH

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: I rise today to recognize this month of May as Sexual Assault Prevention Month in Ontario. This month is a time to raise awareness of the devastating impact that sexual assault has on our society. It's also a time to focus on the measures that are being taken to stop the violence and to support the survivors.

Throughout May, women's shelters, sexual assault centres and advocates will be speaking out in their communities on the need to end sexual assaults. Last Friday, the Premier and Minister Leal were at the Kawartha Sexual Assault Centre in Peterborough to kick off Sexual Assault Prevention Month, so I thank them for that.

Around the world, people are struggling with the prevalence of sexual violence and are acting on the desire for that violence to end.

In Canada alone, one in three women will experience sexual violence in her lifetime—one in three women.

That statistic is a devastating reality for those who have been affected, whether through personal experience or through the experience of a family member, a friend or a colleague. It is unacceptable.

That's why our government is moving forward with It's Never Okay, our bold Action Plan to Stop Sexual Violence and Harassment in Ontario.

We saw the need for stronger action on how we, as a government and a society, confront these burdens. But it's also an opportunity to bring a much-needed focus to an issue that can be hard to talk about openly and honestly.

Our \$41-million plan is the sum of many, many parts, each crucial to an effective response to sexual violence and harassment.

The plan includes new procedures to improve the experience of survivors navigating the criminal justice system. It includes better funding for community-based sexual assault centres to give more support to survivors, and it provides for safer workplaces and safer campuses, through new legislation. It will also help to ensure that young people learn about gender equality and respectful relationships at an early age.

Above all, the plan recognizes the need to challenge and change the deep-rooted attitudes and behaviours that are at the very core of sexual violence and harassment.

I'm very proud that our public education campaign got off to a great start earlier this year with our powerful ad and hashtag, which is #WhoWillYouHelp. The ad has been seen around the world, and our best estimates are that the ad has reached about 83.5 million people. It's fantastic. This ad, the same ad, has been viewed more than 1.8 million times on YouTube alone. I don't know if you look at YouTube, Speaker, but it has been viewed—

Interjection.

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: He says yes, so thank you for that.

1520

In the past two months, our government has moved forward on other key initiatives of the action plan. On March 31, we had our inaugural meeting of Ontario's new permanent Roundtable on Violence Against Women.

Speaker, I just must say that there are so many fabulous women and men from the sector who are very committed to eradicating violence and harassment against women.

I also want to recognize the all-party Select Committee on Sexual Violence and Harassment and thank all the members from all sides of the House for their work and for listening to often very difficult stories from individuals across our province.

Our government understands that stopping sexual violence requires a sustained commitment and a collective effort. We all need to be part of a solution. So during Sexual Assault Prevention Month—and every month, quite frankly—I urge all Ontarians to step up and speak up. Use the hashtag #SAPM to join this month's conversation on social media and keep up with the #It'sNeverOkay and #WhoWillYouHelp campaigns.

Your voices are part of a powerful conversation about creating a province where all people can live safely without fear and with dignity and respect.

PROBATION OFFICERS' WEEK

SEMAINE DES AGENTS DE PROBATION

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: It is a pleasure to rise in this Legislature to recognize probation and parole officers' week and acknowledge the outstanding women and men who serve our communities as probation and parole officers.

Before I begin, Speaker, I would like to acknowledge Dale Boylan, vice-president of the probation and parole officers' association of Ontario, who is here with us today in the members' gallery. Thank you for joining us today, Dale, and thank you for the work you and your members do to make Ontario an even safer place.

Probation and parole officers, along with all correctional staff, are an essential part of Ontario's justice system.

Les agents de probation et de libération conditionnelle, avec tout le personnel des services correctionnels, jouent un rôle essentiel au sein du système de justice de l'Ontario.

The theme for the week is "Motivating and Empowering Change." It underscores the incredible work that probation and parole officers, and all correctional staff, do to work with clients to change their behaviour, guide them to think differently, make better choices, and become part of building safer communities across Ontario.

Mr. Speaker, I think their work was best summed up recently by Christine Beintema, a probation and parole officer in Chatham. This is what she said: "Probation and parole officers believe in a person's ability to change. We work hard to develop rapport with offenders to support and encourage that change, thereby reducing their risk for reoffending in the community."

Speaker, their work forms a key part of our government's transformation of correctional services to break the cycle of reoffending through improved staff and inmate safety, enhanced rehabilitation programs, and successful reintegration through continuing support to ensure that clients become contributing members of society.

Every year, thousands of adults are able to turn their lives around because of the support and guidance of probation or parole officers.

Chaque année, des milliers d'adultes parviennent à transformer leur vie grâce à l'appui et aux conseils des agents de probation et de libération conditionnelle.

As a result of their work, Mr. Speaker, the overall number of offenders who reoffend has in fact declined in recent years, even as the overall risk levels and complexity of offenders under supervision has gone up. We are now taking added steps to build on that success and to significantly reduce the risk of reoffending, especially among high-risk offenders. For example, we're targeting more resources to our medium- to high-risk offenders because evidence tells us that we have

more success in breaking the cycle of reoffending when their sentence is served in the community. That, again, is because of the hard work of our probation and parole officers and the network of thousands of community organizations and support groups that they are plugged into. Likewise, when a person serving a custodial sentence is released, the transition back into the community is likely made easier by the support of a probation and parole officer.

I want to thank Ontario's probation and parole officers, on behalf of our government, for the difference they make in people's lives and in building safer communities.

Je tiens à remercier les agents de probation et de libération conditionnelle de l'Ontario pour la différence qu'ils font dans la vie des gens et dans l'édification de collectivités plus sûres.

The duties of probation and parole officers and all correctional staff have become increasingly complex, very demanding and challenging. It is appropriate that we honour the contributions and accomplishments of these men and women and ensure they receive the recognition they deserve.

This week is an opportunity for us to pause and learn more about their profession and to say thank you for the challenges they take on and the excellent work they do on our behalf.

Cette semaine est l'occasion pour nous de célébrer les agents de probation et de libération conditionnelle, d'en apprendre davantage sur leur profession, et de les remercier pour les défis qu'ils relèvent et l'excellent travail qu'ils font en notre nom.

Mr. Speaker, I encourage all members to use this week to visit a local probation and parole office to say hello and to congratulate them for their tireless efforts to keep our communities safe.

SOUTH ASIAN HERITAGE MONTH

Hon. Dipika Damerla: May is South Asian Heritage Month. South Asians began arriving in Canada at the turn of the 20th century. They come from all parts: India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Nepal, Sri Lanka, as well as parts of Africa and the Caribbean. There are more than one million people of South Asian descent living in Ontario today in the GTA. This is a community as ethnically, culturally and religiously diverse as any in Canada.

Festivities to celebrate South Asian Heritage Month will be held all across Ontario, giving us all a chance to learn about and celebrate the many contributions that this community has made to our economy, our culture and our neighbourhoods.

Speaker, I rise today to remind my colleagues that May is South Asian Heritage Month in Ontario. Since 2001, this is a month during which we make a point of recognizing a community that helped build this province. It's a community that, to this day, continues to help make Ontario culturally richer and economically stronger.

The first South Asian migrants to Canada arrived in Vancouver in 1903. For many decades following, British Columbia was their destination of choice. But that began

to change in the 1950s, when many South Asians turned their eyes to Ontario and the wonderful opportunities offered by our province. Today, the South Asian diaspora in Ontario includes more than one million people, mostly in the GTA, but also in Ottawa, Hamilton, London and Windsor.

This community is, quite simply, one of the most diverse populations in Canada. Newcomers also arrive here from South Asian pockets in other parts of the world, created during colonial times. These include Uganda, Kenya, Guyana, Trinidad and Tobago, Fiji, and Mauritius. Speaker, these are communities within a community, and we are proud to have welcomed them into ours. As a result, South Asian Canadians represent a number of different religions and cultures.

Through their diversity, they are making an important contribution to Ontario's social, cultural and economic fabric. This includes their insights about a part of the world that is rapidly growing in economic importance. Indeed, every newcomer to Ontario from this region holds an important connection to their former home and can help bring more wealth and prosperity to Ontario.

Ontario was built on immigration, and our future prosperity depends on immigration. Immigration creates the cultural and religious diversity that makes our province one of the greatest places in the world to live.

This month, I urge my colleagues to think about the ways in which South Asian Canadians have contributed to our province and helped make it a better place. There will be festivities celebrating South Asian culture all across the province in May, and I urge all Ontarians to join in.

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

SEXUAL ASSAULT PREVENTION MONTH

Ms. Laurie Scott: I'm pleased to rise on behalf of the Progressive Conservative caucus to address Sexual Assault Prevention Month.

Since 1988, May has been Sexual Assault Prevention Month in Canada. For 31 days, individuals, teachers, nurses, campuses and community organizations make extra efforts to inform the public about what constitutes sexual assault and the changes necessary to eradicate this abuse.

1530

It is called Sexual Assault Prevention Month because it is not enough to be aware of the issue. We need to stop it before it happens.

"Sexual violence" is a broad term that includes sexual assault, sexual harassment, rape and trafficking. Verbal sexual harassment and the use of photos sent over the Internet are also forms of sexual violence. In each case, consent is not given, or certainly not given freely.

One in three Canadian women will experience sexual assault in their lifetime, with the majority of victims being under 25 years of age. According to Canada's National Clearinghouse on Family Violence in 2008, one

in six Canadian men will be sexually assaulted in their lifetime.

Acknowledging that sexual assault happens is a first step towards addressing this issue. As a member of the Select Committee on Sexual Violence and Harassment, I've heard first-hand from front-line service providers and survivors themselves who have appeared that there is still more that can be done to combat this issue. I'm sure that our work will help address where those gaps may exist.

I want to finish by thanking all of the sexual assault centres, including my own Kawartha Sexual Assault Centre and Women's Resources, for all their important work.

PROBATION OFFICERS' WEEK

Mr. Jeff Yurek: On behalf of the PC Party I would like to recognize Probation Officers' Week and pay tribute to the men and women who serve Ontario's communities as probation and parole officers.

Probation and parole officers play an important role in helping to ensure public safety in Ontario by managing offenders sentenced to serve their time outside correctional facilities. Because probation and parole officers play an important role in protecting our safety, it is important that we ensure that we attract and recruit candidates of the highest calibre. Therefore, those who go into the profession are required to hold a degree in one of the following disciplines: social work, psychology, sociology or criminology, or a degree and experience greater than five years in total in social services or correctional organizations. They must also possess strong verbal and written communication skills, as well as counselling and assessment skills.

Once hired, new probation and parole officers must successfully complete a comprehensive basic training program that builds on the empirical research and principles of effective correctional intervention and programming. They are given ongoing training in subjects that will help them perform their duties in a professional and effective manner.

The parole and probation officers of this province are great professionals, great advocates of our community and ensure that we remain safe in our homes at the same time as ensuring that those who are serving their time outside in the community—helping them transform back into the community so that they will be serving the population once they return.

I thank the parole and probation officers of this province. I look forward to the government continuing to work well with this profession. In addition, I'd also like to note that we hope they put their safety in the forefront, just as we hope that correctional officers too are looked after with their safety.

SOUTH ASIAN HERITAGE MONTH

Mr. Monte McNaughton: It's an honour to rise today on behalf of the PC caucus to recognize May as South Asian Heritage Month.

The South Asian culture is vibrant and thriving here in Ontario. The minister has recounted the great legacy of that community, which stretches back 177 years from today to a date we mark as South Asian Arrival Day.

This community continues to grow here and to contribute in meaningful ways to the greater good of our province. We see this community well represented in the spheres of academia, athletics, business, research and innovation, politics and entrepreneurship. The rich cultural contributions and the robust economic contributions that they make are appreciated across the province. I hope that we can all take this occasion as an opportunity to enrich our understanding and appreciation of South Asia's rich culture, traditions and heritage.

Sadly, with the terrible earthquake that afflicted the people of Nepal and northern India just over a week ago, this is also a time to extend our condolences and prayers to the people of those countries.

Our South Asian community provides a living social, economic and diplomatic bridge between Ontario and many prospering countries throughout the world. They have played and will continue to play a vital role as we all work towards making Ontario the best place to live, work and raise our families.

On behalf of the Ontario PC caucus, I want to thank the South Asian community and wish them a very happy South Asian Heritage Month.

SEXUAL ASSAULT PREVENTION MONTH

Ms. Peggy Sattler: Each May in Ontario, Sexual Assault Prevention Month recognizes that the prevention of sexual assault is a collective responsibility. It is not the responsibility of women, who are constantly being told, "Don't wear revealing clothing, don't drink too much, don't invite men into your apartment and always keep an eye on your drink."

Over the years, warnings like this have perpetuated a pervasive rape culture, particularly on post-secondary campuses where as many as one quarter of female students experience some form of sexual assault. Rape culture suggests that the onus is on women to prevent the assault and to prove that they were not responsible for it. By doing so, it removes accountability from the perpetrators who commit the assault.

Shifting from a culture of "no means no" to "yes means yes" means teaching boys from an early age about consent, respect and rights. We need to stop blaming victims of assault, who can be men as well as women. We need to build a system that stops revictimizing survivors.

A 2004 study in Canada found that a single incident of sexual assault can be a life-shattering experience, with survivors feeling fear, guilt, shame and low self-esteem. Yet many survivors do not report to the police because they fear being blamed and because they fear being stigmatized and traumatized by a system that results in a conviction rate of less than 1%.

Let us commit to creating a coordinated, integrated and survivor-led approach to the prevention of sexual assault that focuses on public education, that truly supports survivors, that ensures trauma-informed responses from police, health care, education, social services and justice, and that respects survivors' needs for constructive and supportive alternatives to the justice system.

PROBATION OFFICERS' WEEK

Ms. Jennifer K. French: I'm honoured to rise on behalf of probation and parole officers from across Ontario to recognize probation and parole officers' week and the important role they play in keeping communities safe across our province.

As you know, I'm still new to the role of NDP critic for community safety and correctional services, but I have been learning as fast as I can, and I've had the opportunity to meet with some probation and parole officers already, as well as a number of other correctional staff. I hope to reflect some of their concerns here today.

I thank the minister for the sincerity of his comments and for voicing his support of probation and parole officers, but actions speak louder than words and there are still a number of things we can do as legislators to support correctional workers—most urgently, understaffing. The government needs to address the significant understaffing of probation and parole officers in our communities and correctional officers in our provincial facilities.

According to the Auditor General, there is currently a 60% recidivism rate and a great deal of that can be attributed to understaffing. The minister referenced a number of initiatives that the ministry is undertaking to expand the role of probation and parole officers in community safety, but ultimately these promises ring hollow until this root cause is addressed. This is not an effective formula for enhancing public safety.

Probation and parole officers in Ontario have the highest caseload of any province in Canada. I ask the minister to take a progressive approach, address chronic understaffing and invest in our community safety. Our probation and parole officers deserve to be safe, appreciated and sufficiently staffed. Thank you to our probation and parole officers for the work they do.

SOUTH ASIAN HERITAGE MONTH

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: It's my pleasure to rise today on behalf of the Ontario NDP in recognition of South Asian Heritage Month. Across Ontario there's recognition for many contributions of the South Asian community in the province. We know, according to 2006 census data, that more than five million, or 16%, of Canadians are visible minorities, with South Asian and Chinese accounting for almost half this number.

South Asian Heritage Month celebrates the long and rich history of Asian Canadians and their contributions to Canada and the world and particularly for us today in this

province. That's because a large majority of the Canadian population of South Asian origin, whether East Indian, Pakistani, Sri Lankan, Punjabi or Tamil, to name a few, is concentrated in Ontario.

In 2001, Ontario was the home to 62% of all Canadians of South Asian origin, while another 22% lived in British Columbia. For South Asians, the month of May has been a time of celebration and commemoration of their arrival from the Indian subcontinent to Canada in acknowledgement of their connection and the right to migrate as British subjects, and this they share with the founders of this province.

Today, South Asians make up a significant proportion of Ontario's population and are proud to draw upon their heritage and traditions, contributing to many aspects of culture, commerce and public service across this province. We are proud to recognize and pay tribute to the contributions South Asian immigrants have made and continue to make to the development and general well-being of the province of Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I thank all members for their statements. It's now time for petitions.

1540

PETITIONS

SPECIAL-NEEDS CHILDREN

Mr. Percy Hatfield: I have a petition, titled "Maintain the John McGivney Children's Centre Preschool Program," addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

"To make up any funding shortfalls that result from transitioning to a fee subsidy model so that the John McGivney Children's Centre preschool program can re-

main operational and consider changes to the income test to better reflect the increased costs families raising children with special needs incur.”

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

FRENCH-LANGUAGE EDUCATION

Mr. Arthur Potts: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

“Whereas section 23 of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms guarantees access to publicly funded French-language education; and

“Whereas there are more than 1,000 children attending French elementary schools in east Toronto ... and those numbers continue to grow; and

“Whereas there is no French secondary school ... in east Toronto, requiring students wishing to continue their studies in French school boards to travel two hours every day to attend the closest French secondary school, while several English schools in east Toronto sit half-empty since there are no requirements or incentives for school boards to release underutilized schools to other boards in need; and

“Whereas it is well documented that children leave the French-language system for the English-language system between grades 7 and 9 due to the inaccessibility of French-language secondary schools, and that it is also well established that being educated in French at the elementary level is not sufficient to solidify French-language skills for life; and

“Whereas the Ontario government acknowledged in February 2007 that there is an important shortage of French-language schools in all of Toronto and even provided funds to open some secondary schools, and yet, not a single French secondary school has opened in east Toronto; and

“Whereas the commissioner of French-language services stated in a report in June 2011 that ‘... time is running out to address the serious shortage of at least one new French-language school at the secondary level in the eastern part of the city of Toronto’; and

“Whereas the Ministry of Education has confirmed that we all benefit when school board properties are used effectively in support of publicly funded education and that the various components of our education system should be aligned to serve the needs of students; and

“Whereas parents and students from both French Catholic and French public elementary schools in east Toronto are prepared to find common ground across all language school systems to secure space for a French-language secondary school in east Toronto;

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

“That the Minister of Education assist one or both French school boards in locating a suitable underutilized school building in east Toronto that may be sold or shared for the purpose of opening a French secondary

school ... in the community ... so that French students have a secondary school close to where they live.”

I agree with this petition. I leave it with Abdullah.

PESTICIDES

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

HOSPITAL FUNDING

M^{me} France Gélinas: I have this petition that was given to me by René and Carole Ménard, from Hanmer, in my riding. It reads as follows:

“Whereas Health Sciences North is facing major budget shortfalls leading to a decrease of 87,000 hours of nursing care in psychiatry, day surgery, the surgical unit, obstetrics, mental health services, oncology, critical care, and the emergency department, the closure of beds on the surgical unit, as well as cuts to support services including cleaning; and

“Whereas Ontario’s provincial government has cut hospital funding in real dollar terms for the last eight years in a row; and

“Whereas these cuts will risk higher medical accident rates as nursing and direct patient care hours are reduced all across the hospital;”

They “petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to:

“Stop the proposed cuts to Health Sciences North and protect beds and services.

“Increase overall hospital funding in Ontario with a plan to increase funding at least to the average of other provinces.”

I fully support this petition, and I will ask Ishika to bring it to the Clerk.

EMPLOYMENT PRACTICES

Mr. Arthur Potts: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly.

“Whereas some establishments have instituted unfair tipping practices in which a portion of tips and gratuities are being deducted and kept by owners;

“Whereas employees in establishments where tipping is a standard practice, such as restaurants, bars and hair salons, supplement their income with tips and gratuities and depend on those to maintain an adequate standard of living;

“Whereas customers expect that when they leave a tip or gratuity that the benefit will be going to the employees who directly contributed to their positive experience;

“Whereas most establishments do respect their employees and do not collect their tips and gratuities unfairly and thus are left at a disadvantage compared to those owners who use tips and gratuities to pad their margins;

“Whereas other jurisdictions in North America such as Quebec, New Brunswick and New York City have passed legislation to protect employees’ tips;

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

“That all members of the Legislative Assembly of Ontario support Bill 12, the Protecting Employees’ Tips Act, 2014, and help shield Ontario employees and businesses from operators with improper tipping practices while protecting accepted and standard practices such as tip pooling among employees.”

I wholeheartedly agree with my private member’s bill, and I sign my initials.

WINTER ROAD MAINTENANCE

Ms. Laurie Scott: I have a timely petition in support of improved winter road maintenance.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

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

“Whereas ensuring our roads are as safe as possible during the winter driving season is one of the fundamental responsibilities of the Ministry of Transportation;

“Whereas the unsafe conditions in the winter of 2013-14 led to a special investigation by the Auditor General of Ontario;

“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, and 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 sign my signature to this and pass this to page Thomas.

POET LAUREATE

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

“Whereas poets laureate have been officially recognized at all levels of Canadian government and in at least 15 countries around the world; and

“Whereas the establishment of our own poet laureate for the province of Ontario would promote literacy and celebrate Ontario culture and heritage, along with raising public awareness of poetry and of the spoken word; and

“Whereas the member from Windsor–Tecumseh has introduced private member’s Bill 71 to establish the Office of Poet Laureate for the province of Ontario as a non-partisan attempt to promote literacy, to focus attention on our amazing poets and to give new focus to the arts community in Ontario;

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

“To support the establishment of the Office of Poet Laureate as an officer of the Ontario Legislature and that private member’s Bill 71, An Act to establish the Poet Laureate of Ontario, receive swift passage through the legislative process.”

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

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DOG OWNERSHIP

Mr. Todd Smith: I have a petition here for the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

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

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

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

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

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

I’m going to give it to the big page Colton here beside me and sign it.

GASOLINE PRICES

M^{me} France Gélinas: I have this petition that was given to me by Agostino Alves. He's from Geraldton. It goes as follows:

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

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

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

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

They petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

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

I fully support this petition, will affix my name to it, and ask Joshua to bring it to the Clerk.

WATER FLUORIDATION

Ms. Daiene Vernile: This is a petition on fluoride for all Ontario drinking water.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

I agree with this petition. I will sign my name to it and give it to Jae Min.

ALZHEIMER'S DISEASE

Mr. Percy Hatfield: I have 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

"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 agree with this petition. I will sign my name to it and give it to Madison to bring up to the Clerk.

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

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 May 4, 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. Paul Miller): The debate ended with the government.

The member of the official opposition; the member from Oxford.

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I am pleased to rise today to speak to Bill 91. Before I get into the specifics of the bill, I want to just take a moment to comment on the budget overall. The government promised to balance the budget by 2017-18. That's only two years away. This budget should have laid out a real plan to get us there; instead, we saw spending increases of \$2.4 billion.

When the Liberal government took office in 2003, the provincial debt stood at \$139 billion. A dozen years later, it now stands at \$299 billion. If it were a government ministry, interest on the debt would now be the third-largest Ontario ministry after health and education. In fact, the cost to service our debt is up 5.7%, which would also make it the fastest-growing ministry. Compare that to health care spending, which is up just 1.9%. That's not even enough to keep up with inflation and population growth, and it means further cuts to front-line services at hospitals and elsewhere within the system.

I also want to point out what's not in this bill or in this budget. Despite the increase in spending of \$2.4 billion, there is no additional help for the farmers. There are no steps towards increasing the cap on risk management programs. Despite the increase in spending of \$2.4 billion, municipalities saw another decrease in the important Ontario Municipal Partnership Fund grants. Despite the increase in spending of \$2.4 billion, we are actually seeing less provincial money going into health care. The Canada Health Transfer from the federal government to Ontario increased by—and this is very important—\$652 million, but health care spending in this budget only increases by \$598 million, a difference of \$54 million. That means there is \$54 million less in provincial dollars going into health care.

There are also no steps in this bill or this budget towards addressing the five key requests that the PC caucus put forward. We asked the government to streamline home care services. Instead, they created a new layer of bureaucracy.

We asked them to put forward a serious, credible, detailed plan to deal with the deficit and debt. Instead, spending increased by \$2.4 billion.

We asked them to listen to experts like the Ontario Chamber of Commerce and the Canadian Federation of Independent Business, and for the government to walk away from the Ontario Retirement Pension Plan. Instead, they recommitted to the plan, which will only increase costs for both employees and businesses.

We asked them to reject the planned implementation of a carbon tax, the so-called tax on everything. Instead, they are embracing it.

We asked them to take action to make electricity rates more affordable. Instead, the government is proposing to sell our hydro assets and put an increasing burden on the

ratepayers. Not only did the government not take action to reduce hydro rates, as we had asked, but this bill contains measures that will actually increase rates by selling off the majority of Hydro One.

Mr. Speaker, this proposal to sell off Hydro One is a little like selling off the house to pay for a fancy new sports car. At first, it's great, and you show it off to your friends. You drive it all over the place. But after a couple of years, you need major repairs or a new car. You have nothing to show for it, and the asset is gone.

In fact, in 2003, the member from Guelph, who is now the Minister of Education, shared our views on this subject. At the time, she said, "They understood that we need to hang on to our public assets like generators and Hydro One.... They understood that if you just sell off public assets, that's a one-year wonder. You do it once and then it's gone, and then what are you left with? You're left with a deficit."

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The Premier has already stated that she can't guarantee that this won't drive hydro costs up any further. Over the last few years we've seen hydro rates spiral in Ontario. People and businesses don't have any room left in their budget for more increases.

I recently heard from a constituent who is now heating her home with wood and worked hard to get her hydro costs down. Her usage in one month was only \$87.64, yet with the extra charges—delivery charges, debt retirement, regulatory charges and HST—the total amount of the bill was \$274.87.

This government doesn't seem to understand the impact that these hydro rate increases have had, that people are being forced to choose between heat and eat. They don't understand that people are being forced to leave their homes. This government doesn't seem to understand that hydro increases are forcing businesses out of this province.

In my recent Oxford business survey, 94% of the businesses said that they had been impacted by the increased cost of hydro. When companies choose where they build or expand, the cost of doing business is a major factor. For many companies, the cost of hydro is one of the reasons they choose to locate elsewhere. It's one of the reasons that our businesses are struggling to make ends meet and to grow.

The Ontario Federation of Agriculture's column following the budget said, "With no mention of a province-wide farm electricity rate and a delay in the natural gas expansion program to rural Ontario, farmers will have to wait longer for more competitive energy costs."

The people and businesses of Ontario have been asking this government for help. They don't want to give up control of hydro. They want you to use the control that you have to help people who are struggling. They want you to use the control you have to reduce hydro costs. Instead, this government is proposing to give away majority control and oversight.

Last year, the CEO of Hydro One made \$745,000, but that may be the last time that the people who are paying

for his salary get to know what it is because this bill exempts Hydro One from the Public Sector Salary Disclosure Act or so-called sunshine law. When public salaries were released, CBC News reported, “There are about 12,500 employees from OPG, Hydro One and their subsidiaries on the 2014 list, up by nearly 1,000 over 2013, when the Auditor General warned those salaries were driving up electricity rates.”

Now, not only will Hydro One not appear on the sunshine list; neither the auditor nor the Ombudsman would have the authority to investigate problems there. The government cannot give up this oversight. The hydro users of Ontario can’t afford it.

The government will tell us that when Hydro One becomes an independent corporation, they can no longer give the Auditor General jurisdiction, but that simply is not true. I’d like to remind them that they managed to do exactly that with the Technical Standards and Safety Authority in 2009. They introduced and passed legislation which would give the auditor the authority to investigate the TSSA and access to documents, even though the TSSA is an independent, not-for-profit corporation, is not a government agency and the majority of the board are not appointed by the province.

Under this proposal, the government will be prohibited by law from selling more than 60% of Hydro One. That’s what it says in the budget. But unfortunately, that only works if the government respects our laws. For instance, when we were in government we passed a law to ensure that if Hydro One was sold, the proceeds had to go first to pay down the remaining debt. This was to protect taxpayers to ensure that a future government didn’t go on spending sprees and leave taxpayers and hydro users stuck with the debt and no asset.

However, this act would amend that law so that the minister has the ability to put as much of the proceeds as he wants into general revenues, which means that the government gets their spending spree and the people of Ontario will be stuck with the bill.

Hydro isn’t the only cost-of-living-and-doing-business increase under this government’s proposals. This bill will continue the implementation of the ill-advised mandatory pension program. The government likes to talk about this pension like it’s free and that people are winning the Cash for Life lottery, but the reality is that every dollar that goes into the pension program is being deducted from hard-working Ontarians or taken from an Ontario business. It’s money that otherwise would have gone to paying the bills, paying down the mortgage or making sure that the kids had new, warm clothes for the winter. It’s money that these businesses could use to expand and create new jobs or, in some cases, use to just stay in business and keep contributing to Ontario’s economy.

Recently, I had the opportunity, through surveys, to ask both my constituents and businesses in my riding about the proposed pension. Seventy-eighty per cent of my constituents who responded said they can’t afford to pay 1.9% of their income into the proposed pension program. They recognize that this isn’t free money. It’s money that is coming out of their pockets.

Is it really up to the government to decide how this money is to be spent? Is it really up to the government to decide that it’s better investing in this pension scheme than paying down the mortgage or paying down the credit card, which they’re paying 19% interest on? Is it really going to leave people in Ontario better off if implementing the pension costs jobs, as the government’s own documents show it will? Ninety per cent of Oxford businesses said they would be impacted by the proposed pension plan and most of these said the impact would be significant.

In the same survey, I also asked businesses about a carbon tax and 86% of the respondents said they would be impacted by it—negatively impacted by it, I might add.

The Minister of Economic Development, Employment and Infrastructure stated that this carbon tax will take money out of companies’ hands and put it in government coffers. He said it would take money out of our economy.

In jurisdictions where they’ve tried it, a cap-and-trade system has not led to significant emission reductions and this type of system has proven to be easily manipulated. This tax would drive up the cost of every product that my constituents use.

Already the Premier said that consumers can anticipate an increase of 2.5 to 3.5 cents a litre on gasoline under this proposed plan. This is from the same government that said there would be minimal impact on hydro rates from the Green Energy Act. For people who live in rural areas, driving isn’t a luxury. The minister may not understand that. It’s a necessity to go to work, to get the groceries. It is another increase in the cost of living that they can’t afford. I believe in protecting the environment, but I don’t believe that the solution is to tax everything. I don’t believe the people of Ontario can afford that.

Earlier I pointed out that despite the \$2.4-billion increase in spending, municipalities are again seeing cuts in the municipal partnership fund grants. The government will claim that they are supporting municipalities through transit but, on page 49 of the budget papers, it states, “The province encourages municipal partners to explore financing tools, such as asset optimization, to help ensure these projects may proceed.” That means they’re going to force municipalities to sell assets to finance transit. Not only is this government selling the house to buy a fancy sports car, they are forcing municipalities to do the same thing.

There are also a number of other changes in the budget and this bill that impact municipalities. For instance, section 41 amends the Taxpayer Protection Act to allow the minister to increase fees in unorganized territories without a referendum as long as it’s done by January 1, 2017. This is the first step in property land tax reform. The government will tell us that this is something that municipalities have been asking for, but that’s not completely accurate.

What municipalities have been asking for is recognition that those adjacent to unorganized territories incur costs from residents of those areas. Many people from

unorganized territories use community centres, libraries and long-term-care homes. Some municipalities supply emergency services to residents in unorganized territories. In one case, the mayor pointed out that on one built-up road residents on one side are in the municipality while the other side is unorganized territory. Their fire trucks don't stop because the person who called is on the wrong side of the street.

The government has committed to PLT reform and increasing the amount paid by the residents in unorganized territories, but nowhere in the speech at ROMA or in this budget do they commit to giving those increased revenues to the municipalities who are incurring the costs.

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I wrote to the Premier, asking for this commitment following the Good Roads/Rural Ontario Municipal Association conference, and we're still waiting for a reply.

The government is promising consultation, but northern municipalities have heard that before. What they need is a commitment that the government isn't going to raise costs for people in unorganized territories and simply put it into general revenue.

Also buried in the budget pages is a mention of the Power Dam Special Payment Program. Currently, hydro-electric generation stations in Ontario don't pay property taxes to their local municipalities. Instead, they pay a gross revenue charge to the province which, according to the Ministry of Finance, includes their property tax. The ministry then pays the property tax to the municipality through the Power Dam Special Payment Program. In fact, the 2014 budget clearly stated that the payments reflect the amount of property tax the municipality received before the stations became exempt from property tax. Last year's budget suddenly announced that these payments would be cut by 25%, with no warning. The government has promised to look at the long-term solution, but this budget demonstrates that nothing has been resolved. All the government has done is push off the decision, leaving municipalities under threat. We will be watching and working with the municipalities to ensure that there is a real solution to this problem.

Mr. Speaker, municipalities aren't the only ones who have to be concerned about what's hidden in this budget. For instance, look at schedule 14 of this bill, which weakens the rules around government advertising. Instead of leaving it to the good judgment of the Provincial Auditor and her office, advertising will now be judged on a narrow set of rules.

As the provincial Auditor General said, this would put her office "in the untenable and unacceptable position of approving ads because they conform to the narrow requirements of the amended Government Advertising Act, but may be clearly partisan by any objective, reasonable standard."

Mr. Speaker, I can assure you I've never had a constituent come up to me on the street and say that the Auditor General is being too strict on government advertising.

The government says that the auditor is being too picky, focusing on things like colour. Well, if you think colour doesn't matter, just ask my grandson. A few years ago, he declared that when he grew up, he wanted to be in politics, and he was going to be on the blue team, like Opa. The truth is that as politicians, we do think colours matter. If we didn't, our election signs wouldn't be in our party colours. The Liberals wouldn't wear red jackets at the plowing match and have red websites, and there probably wouldn't have been as much red in those ads that the Auditor General rejected.

In my recent survey, I asked companies in Oxford whether they were receiving enough information from government. The majority said yes, but the common theme was that they wanted more practical, fact-based information. One said he needed "clear info—not 'ads' about changes."

Mr. Speaker, Ontario can't afford a government that keeps spending with no regard for deficit or debt, and we can't afford a government that ignores no-cost suggestions which would have made sure tax dollars were spent more efficiently. I want to give you three examples that could have been implemented in this bill.

Last week, I pointed out again the huge burden of red tape and reporting facing our municipalities. One, I pointed out that Bill 73, the Smart Growth for Our Communities Act, adds more reporting requirements onto municipalities—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Ernie. Member from Oxford.

There are only 20 people in the room, and 18 of them are talking, and there's a little group over here too. Can we keep it down? I'm having trouble even hearing him, and he's close to me. Thanks.

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: Municipalities are facing spiralling insurance rates, paid for with taxpayers' dollars that could be used to fix roads or build transit. The government could address this by reforming joint and several liability, but they refuse to take that action.

The third example, and one I have raised in this Legislature many times, is the waste and abuse at the Housing Services Corp. For those who don't know, social housing providers in Ontario are required by law to purchase natural gas and insurance through the Housing Services Corp. The problem is that HSC funds their operation by overcharging for their services, and it adds up to millions of dollars that should have gone into providing housing for vulnerable people. Instead, this money is going to world travel and investments such as a shell corporation in Manchester, England, and for-profit solar companies here in Ontario.

All of these items could have been addressed in this budget. All of these items could have made tax dollars go further and wouldn't have added a single dollar to the significant deficit.

Mr. Speaker, in response to my recent newsletter, 89% of the people said they were concerned about the provincial debt. This budget does nothing to address that.

This bill simply puts forward measures that would increase the cost of living, increase the cost of doing business in Ontario and lower accountability and transparency. It's opposite to the requests our caucus has made. It's opposite to what groups like the chamber of commerce and the Canadian Federation of Independent Business recommended. It's exactly opposite to what my businesses and constituents said we needed.

I hope that the government will listen to the people of my riding and the people of Ontario. I hope you will put forward a real plan to deal with the deficit, and I hope you will withdraw the plans to increase the cost of living and doing business in Ontario and stop forcing our companies and jobs out of this province.

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

Mr. Percy Hatfield: It is indeed a pleasure to follow the member from Oxford. I know he was talking about selling Ontario Hydro. I have to tell you, I have a four-hour train ride every week back and forth to Windsor, and I've read the budget—all 400 pages of it, cover to cover. I came across phrases like “asset optimization,” “maximizing value” and “initial public offering.” I saw the phrase “broadening ownership.”

At least seven times I came across the Premier's new favourite phrase, obviously written by a Liberal-friendly consultant as part of a \$7-million outlay of taxpayer money paid to the government-friendly consultants who worked secretly behind closed doors on a propaganda plan to use smoke and mirrors to pull the wool over the eyes of Ontario taxpayers. What was that phrase, Speaker? No, not, “We will sell Ontario Hydro.” That would be too transparent. The phrase, Speaker, seven times: “We will unlock the value of certain provincial assets.” It doesn't even sound like, “We will sell Ontario Hydro.” “We will unlock the value of certain provincial assets.”

You can run on a campaign using that fuzzy-wuzzy language, but please don't come in this House and say, “Everybody in Ontario knew we were going to sell Ontario Hydro,” because they did not. They do not want to sell Ontario Hydro.

You will pay the price if you go ahead with this plan. Nobody in Ontario wants to lose their public power. The public power of Ontario hydro belongs to everyone in Ontario, not to the Liberal Party, and you should be ashamed for trying to sell it.

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

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: It's always a pleasure to participate in debates with my colleagues from Oxford and Windsor–Tecumseh.

I want to use the little time I have to talk about some good things in the budget that some people may not know about. One of the things that I think is fabulous is, for our students going to colleges and universities who have small assets, like a car or a little bit of part-time income, we're removing that barrier in terms of how income is assessed for purposes of the Ontario Student Assistance Program. That's fantastic. That's on top of, of course, our 30% tuition reduction program.

The other thing that I think has a lot of good news, and it's for small businesses in Ontario—I went through this in some detail myself, having held a couple of post-budget breakfasts, including with a board of trade group in Ajax and Pickering.

There are many initiatives. There's, first, a five-point small business energy savings plan in the budget.

There's a venture capital element, where Ontario contributes up to \$25 million to scale up ventures.

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There is the ongoing reducing red tape initiative through our Open for Business initiative.

We have focused on expanding small to medium exports and opportunities for small businesses to export beyond the US.

There is the helping restaurants and craft brewers grow initiative.

There are numerous tax measures to make Ontario's small business tax system more competitive.

There are, of course, our regional funds.

There are quite a few things that are really helpful to small businesses, because we know that small- and medium-sized businesses make up the majority of businesses in Ontario. I think they make up about 60% of our private sector employers in Ontario, so we need to support them through measures like this.

So I encourage people to look for those great things that help businesses—

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

Mr. Monte McNaughton: I'm proud to stand for a couple of minutes and add my comments, following my colleague from Oxford county, MPP Ernie Hardeman. MPP Hardeman from Oxford is absolutely correct when he talks about the ORPP plan and how it's going to negatively impact the people in the province of Ontario, especially the small business owners across the province.

I also want to pay my respects and credit the NDP member from Windsor–Tecumseh on his very passionate two-minute remarks on this budget. He's absolutely right. Prior to the June 12, 2014, election, the people of Ontario had no idea what was in store for them. This Premier, Kathleen Wynne, did not campaign on firing nurses. She didn't campaign on selling public assets. She didn't campaign on having 817,000 students possibly on Monday—next Monday—out of the classroom because of a province-wide strike in the public education system.

This was nothing but a Liberal tax-and-spend budget that is adding \$2 billion more in fees. The media were quite accurate today that there's \$2 billion more in fees that are going to hit the pocketbooks of hard-working people in the province of Ontario. I think, like the member from Oxford said, this budget should have really put forward ideas to create private sector job growth in this province, not put forward the ORPP.

Also, I think this government needs to deal with the expensive Green Energy Act and the hydro prices, which are now the most expensive in all of North America.

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

M^{me} France Gélinas: I, too, would like to thank the member from Oxford for his comments on the budget. He's right in many parts of his analysis of the budget. We're supposed to see hundreds of billions of dollars of infrastructure money, but then, when you start to look at it, you see that this investment is going to be in areas of population growth. When you talk to representatives from northern Ontario or from rural Ontario, that means that's not for us. They're talking about this massive infrastructure money that is going to be collected, that we'll have to vacuum the pockets of everybody to have happen, including people from northern Ontario—and, in his case, from rural Ontario—but the investments are not going to come back to us, because there's that little part in the budget that it is targeted at areas of high population growth. Does that mean our roads and bridges don't fall apart like everybody else's? Of course not. They do. They need repairs, they need investments, but we are not going to be the beneficiaries of this—

Ms. Cindy Forster: And you don't deserve a bus, either.

M^{me} France Gélinas: And apparently, I don't deserve a bus, either. No. The Ontario Northland is on its way out, and now it goes right by some of my communities.

Then there is the sell-off of Hydro One for 3% of the cost of this mega infrastructure build. That makes no sense. To lose the ownership of an asset that allows us to do so much in economic development throughout our province for 3% of that plan? I don't buy it, Speaker. I don't think it has anything to do with—it has to do with privatization, clear and simple.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): That concludes questions and comments, and I return to the member for Oxford for his reply.

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I want to thank the members from Nickel Belt and Lambton–Kent–Middlesex, the Minister of Children and Youth Services responsible for women's issues and, of course, the member from Windsor–Tecumseh. Obviously, it was his comments that I was most taken by—his passionate rendition of the issues with hydro. I was sitting here thinking there was a reason why they didn't tell people during the election what they were going to do with hydro. You and I, looking at the big picture, may have a slight difference of opinion on that, but the reason they didn't tell people, of course, was because of how they were going to do it and what they were going to do with the finances.

Now, I just want to take it to the average homeowner: If you were going to sell your house to pay your bills, you would not tell your mortgage holder that you were doing that because then all the money would go to pay the mortgage before you could sell the house. They want to sell the house. They want to sell hydro without paying the mortgage against it. We're going to have a \$24-billion or \$27-billion mortgage against hydro that is owned 60% by someone else when this is finished.

Now, if they told anyone that, then of course things would fly apart. That would happen if you were selling

your house that way, and that's what should be happening here. If they're going to sell hydro, every dollar should go to pay the mortgage down, so at least the mortgage against hydro was not more than the value of what's left. It already is slightly more, and we don't want to make that even worse.

How could you possibly think, somewhere in that, when you have a mortgage twice the size of your value, that people are not going to pay extra for the interest on all that money in their hydro rates? Why should the people buying the hydro pay for this entity all over again just so we can have transit? Why didn't they just go out and borrow the money and put a mortgage on the transit they're going to build instead of selling hydro? At least they would still control hydro, and they would control transit in exactly the same way.

I want to thank all the people who responded to my presentation.

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

Ms. Cindy Forster: I'm pleased to rise here today and do my 20 minutes on the bill on behalf of New Democrats. I'm going to start by revisiting some of the comments of our leader, Andrea Horwath, and our finance critic, the member from Kitchener–Waterloo.

This is a budget that fails our province and fails the hard-working families in Ontario. Ontarians didn't vote for this budget. The Liberal government's priorities in this budget largely resemble those of the Mike Harris Conservatives back in the 1990s. This budget fails families, it fails education, it fails health care and it fails the care of families' loved ones. The budget makes it impossible to find jobs for people in our communities, and it certainly doesn't make life more affordable for the hard-working families in this province.

Instead, we have a budget full of cuts—cuts to services that people in our province, the most vulnerable people in our province, rely on—and added burdens to household budgets.

The winners here are the windfalls for Bay Street investors, for the Liberal insiders, for consulting fees, for profits from the sale of hydro, and for tendering out RFPs on the ORPP plan instead of making sure that is a public pension plan where all the money is invested back to the people who most need that pension. It does nothing to address the thousands of manufacturing jobs lost in the sector or to help the half-million people who are currently out of work in this province.

I have an interesting email here from a fellow who actually has a factory in Welland, but he lives in St. Catharines. I think the minister without portfolio will find this one interesting because this factory owner called just about a month ago and wanted to know what was up with the debt retirement charge on his plant's monthly hydro bill. His manufacturing plant employs 18 people full-time. They operate Monday to Thursday, 7 a.m. to 3:30 p.m., and 5 a.m. to 9 a.m. on Fridays, because he's a good employer and he wants to give his employees a little bit more time off on the weekend.

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Despite winter being his slow period of time, he saw his monthly bills rise from \$2,700 to \$3,500 a month, almost a 25% increase. He expects that they'll go to \$4,000 a month, which would be a 50% increase, when the plant gets busier this spring and summer. And that's even before the 42% hydro rate increases that have been announced for the next five years. He's finding this a squeeze. He is considering adjusting the hours of operations, but he doesn't want to move his production to night shifts. He doesn't want his workers to have their quality of life or family life interrupted.

The interesting piece is, though, he actually called the minister's office and they referred him to me—to call me in Welland—to take this issue to Queen's Park.

The Liberal government is proposing the sale of Hydro One, which will mean higher hydro rates, less reliability, no Ombudsman oversight, no FAO oversight, no FIPPA oversight, no Auditor General oversight, and an increase of more than the 42% already announced by this government.

I don't know about all of the members in this House, but certainly people in my community and in my fellow colleagues' communities are having trouble staying afloat. In some cases, people are being forced to pay their energy bills or actually buy groceries.

This budget is forcing Ontarians to pay for the billions of dollars that have been wasted in scandals and misplaced priorities.

I actually had someone ask me the other day how much the OPP investigations are going to cost this government and the people of Ontario. It will be interesting to actually see how those budgets become bloated, once those investigations are completed.

We're seeing today—as our public education system is thrown into chaos by the Liberal government—teachers, students and families being forced to bear that brunt of more cuts. The Liberals, of course, are trying to blame the educators, when it's really the educators who are just trying to protect the system that they have today, that will produce future generations and the leaders of the future here for the province.

Instead of supporting them, we've had mass school closures; we've had children on buses for hours, having to go out of their community to go to school; we've had EAs and teachers fired; we've had plans to increase class sizes; and we've had mass chaos, most recently, in our public school system. This is caused by the Liberals, not the teachers.

This budget cuts poverty reduction programs. It proposes selling off a hydro system—a publicly owned system—to Bay Street, and it opens the door for more privatization to come.

In fact, the Premier really has Mike Harris to thank for setting up her privatization of Hydro One plans. He was the one who laid the foundation that allows Hydro One to be privatized today. For anyone who has forgotten, it was Ontario Hydro that was then split into five successor companies under the Harris government.

But it's not just about me and my NDP caucus, who are so opposed to this plan. It isn't just about New Democrats. A recent poll in the *Globe and Mail* says, "A majority of Ontarians are against the Liberal government's plan to privatize Hydro One...."

A recent poll conducted by Mainstreet Technologies shows that 60% of respondents do not approve of selling off a majority of the public electricity company to the private sector. What's more, 77% said they believe privatization will increase electricity rates.

The article says that "the Liberals have tried to soft-pedal the Hydro One sell-off. They refuse to use the word 'privatization'—or 'sell-off'. Instead, they opt for these buzzwords and buzz-phrases like "broadening ownership," "unlocking value," or "modernization." You can call it what you want, Speaker, but at the end of the day, "privatization" means "sell-off," in this case.

Anyone who lived through the 1990s and early 2000s saw exactly what those repercussions were. They saw a big increase in hydro rates, that never decreased again.

The Premier has tried to downplay her Conservative-style hydro sell-off privatization by distracting Ontario with grocery store beer sales, but I have to tell you that my inbox has had one Beer Store story for every 100 hydro privatization emails in recent weeks. My inbox will tell you that Ontarians cannot be taken for granted, despite how desperately the Liberal Premier tries to sugar-coat it. Privatization is privatization, and it equals sell-off.

Each passing day, we're learning from the Premier and her Liberal government that they're taking pages from the Mike Harris Conservative playbook—the Common Sense Revolution, I believe they called it in those days. There's not much common sense about this plan.

To make things worse, the Liberal government is trying to ram this through and limit public consultation. I won't be surprised if there's a time allocation motion; there has been a time allocation motion for every bill in this House since we came back here in July of last year. It's bad enough that the Premier refuses to be straight with Ontarians about the sell-off of Hydro One, but now the House leader and the Liberals are going to try to limit public debate.

In fact, my House leader, the member from Timmins—James Bay, wrote a letter just last week to the government House leader asking them to reconsider the shocking time limits put on the discussion of not only the hydro issue but the budget bill in its entirety. Some of the most significant changes in Ontario's history are embedded in this bill, and we're only going to get very few days of hearings at this point, in Toronto.

I can tell you that there are people from Thunder Bay to Fort Erie and from Windsor to Sault Ste. Marie who want to talk about this bill and want to get on that list to make their presentations. The government has a duty to do wide consultation because this bill, this hydro sell-off, will be felt in all corners of this province. We live in a democracy, and this should be a democratic process for all the people who actually live in Ontario.

At the end of the day, about the hydro sell-off, even the Conservatives backed down 12, 13 or 14 years ago. For anyone on the other side who will argue otherwise, I would challenge the Premier and her government to have the committee travel across the province and hear from hard-working Ontarians.

The sale of Hydro One is wrong. It's the wrong thing to do. Privatizing was wrong more than a decade ago and it's still wrong today. We know this. Hydro rates went up 25% shortly after the Conservatives privatized the generation of power—25% almost overnight. That's why it ended. Nova Scotia privatized its hydroelectric system, and it now has some of the highest rates in Canada, almost rivalling the current rates—without the 42% increase already announced and the increases that will happen once the sell-off happens. This story has played out in many jurisdictions across Canada and the US. It's also worth noting that the energy rates now are three times higher than they were in the Harris era. There's no rhyme or reason for this sell-off.

I mentioned earlier that my inbox was flooded with emails about hydro privatization, and I'm hearing not just from individuals; I'm hearing from local sporting agencies and from curling clubs; I'm hearing from manufacturing people in my community.

I can tell you that when I go out to do my grocery shopping on the weekend, Speaker, I often visit Celi and Presti's deli in my community, and I visit Arcuri's Cheese World in my community. Each and every time I go in there, they say, "Cindy, to pay my hydro bill, which is \$1,500 to \$1,600 a month, I have to sell a lot of salami and a lot of provolone to just pay the hydro bills, before I even pay any of my employees or actually take a paycheque home."

I've heard from local manufacturers like ASW in Welland about how the hydro rates are actually hurting the company. I've heard from the Welland Curling Club in my community, who have made major capital investments in the curling club so that they can become as energy-efficient as possible, but every time they invest that capital, the Liberal government increases their hydro rates, so they're no better off than they were before they created those efficiencies. So this Hydro One sell-off isn't supported, really. I haven't heard anybody who's supporting it except Bay Street and Liberal insiders.

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Privatizing hydro will mean higher rates, we know that, and it will mean the loss of hundreds of millions of dollars in revenue—almost \$1 billion a year—for a \$4-million one-time hit. What are you going to sell when that's gone?

We've already seen the Liberal government waste billions of dollars at eHealth, at Ornge, the gas plant scandals to save a few Liberal seats, the Presto card rollout, \$8.2 billion in P3s. All of that money could be going to transit and to infrastructure in this province. So this privatization agenda has left behind, and will leave behind, a costly legacy of waste and scandal.

I want to move on to health care for a few minutes, because that's where I actually come from. To quote the

Ontario Health Coalition, "The real-dollar cuts across ... health care also mean damaging—and potentially irreversible—cuts, closures and privatization of needed health care...."

The RPNAO, the Registered Practical Nurses Association, makes it clear that front-line staff "will continue to suffer from increased workloads, stress, burnout and moral distress associated with watching in frustration as their patients fail to get the level and quality of care they deserve...."

We've had nurses fired across this province—I think almost 2,000 over the last two years—and we who work in the health care field know that every time you cut a registered nursing position, you increase the mortality rates for patients in this province. There have been a lot of studies on that issue, and so the government needs to take heed about that.

On top of the cuts to our health care system, the Liberal government is also implementing its fourth consecutive hospital freeze, so we in rural and northern communities are seeing our hospitals close. I spoke about this this morning: Already in my own riding and the member from Niagara Falls's riding—he is here today—we've seen Niagara-on-the-Lake hospital close, Fort Erie hospital close, Port Colborne hospital close, and now they want to close my hospital in Welland, even though it serves a population of 100,000 people.

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: Don't do it.

Ms. Cindy Forster: We're not going to do it.

So just like people from rural areas where they have to travel three hours to deliver their baby, we're having those same kinds of situations, where they've consolidated those services in one hospital in the region.

No jurisdiction in Canada or any developed country has cut public hospital care to the extent that the current Ontario government has. It is unprecedented. We actually have the lowest per capita funding for public hospitals in this province than any province in Canada—the lowest.

Interjection.

Ms. Cindy Forster: Yes.

This fact underlines that they are choices by this Liberal government. They are not necessities; they can and they should be changed.

Natalie Mehra from the Ontario Health Coalition says, "For patients, it means spending days on stretchers in hospital hallways because there are no beds...." And if you met with the paramedics today, they will tell you that their job has changed dramatically over the years. Originally, they were put in place to address emergencies; now they can spend full shifts in emergency departments because of the cuts to the budgets of the emergencies and of hospitals in this province.

So, once again, the Liberal government seems to be taking a few pages out of Mike Harris's Common Sense Revolution:

—the creation of P3 hospitals, where for-profit corporations would finance new hospital facilities and operate the hospital support services. So how it works is that they lease them back to the hospital, and then at the end of 40

years you get a hospital that has not been maintained at the same standard that it would have been had it been publicly funded;

- the establishment of for-profit and diagnostic clinics for MRIs and CT scans;
- the firing of nurses.

I'm going to spend my last couple of minutes talking about privatization in the community, something else that originated under the Harris government but that the Liberals have had 13 years to change. You know, community care is still for-profit for the most part in this province. Right now we have 140 registered nurses and registered practical nurses in St. Catharines, Welland, Niagara Falls and Simcoe on strike, hired by Care-Partners.

Now, Linda Knight was a nurse and—she should be ashamed of herself—then became a banker. She has 14 for-profit agencies in this province. She made \$600,000-plus last year—\$400,000 in wages and \$200,000 in perks—that should have gone to patient care had the Liberal government, sometime in the last 13 years, moved back to a public community system.

These are the most vulnerable patients coming out of the hospital today. You know, in the old days, when a patient left the hospital and needed home care, they were four, five, 10 days post-op, depending on the surgery. Today you go in for a hip replacement, and you're being discharged the next day. The money that should be going to look after patients in the system is actually going to pad the pockets of CEOs who are making as much or more than the heads of our CCACs and the heads of our LHINs.

The NDP has said over the last few years that we should be capping public sector CEO salaries, and that is one way that we could actually reinvest back into programs. But when you have a community system which is actually providing a large amount of health care now in a for-profit system, a large amount of the money is actually going to profit and to padding the pockets of the people who get into that business.

In closing, I'm happy to have had the opportunity. I probably could have done another 30 or 40 minutes but I don't have that time, so I'm going to sit down now and let the two-minutes go on. We'll see how the rest of the day goes.

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

Hon. James J. Bradley: Speaker, you've been in this House a long time. Please tell me I wasn't that negative in opposition. I guess I probably was that negative in opposition, because that's their role.

I'm just going to touch on a couple of things. I'm going to recommend to the member reading the book *Minding the Public Purse* by Dr. Janice MacKinnon, who was the NDP finance minister in Saskatchewan when the NDP closed 52 rural hospitals. They didn't do it to be mean. They didn't do it because they hate hospital workers or hospital settings. This is simply that the NDP, when in power, had to face the realities of office. So I

recommend to you *Minding the Public Purse* by Dr. Janice MacKinnon. I won't mention Frances Lankin's name because she is part of a policy that's being developed out there.

I do want to mention something very positive about my friend from Niagara Falls. As he knows, we don't face a Liberal-friendly media in the Niagara Peninsula or an NDP-friendly media in the Niagara Peninsula. So the day after the budget, the usual suspects were saying, "Well, there's nothing in it for Niagara." It wasn't the Liberal member for St. Catharines, it was the NDP member for Niagara Falls who on the radio the next day corrected them and said that Brock University had an investment of \$10 million for their new business school. He was correcting the others. That was very good news in the budget that many people have advocated for.

I want to take the opportunity to commend my friend from Niagara Falls for being fair enough to say to those who were saying that there was nothing good in it—we know the usual suspects—he was one who was prepared to be fair about it. I commend him for that.

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

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Mr. Jeff Yurek: First of all, before I make comment on the member from Welland, 20 minutes ago Ryan's Law was given royal assent. It's officially law. It's a great day. For World Asthma Day, it kind of coincided, so I'm quite proud of that.

I'll just make a few comments on the budget. This is a budget basically of increased taxes and increased fees. You're seeing the debt go to \$300 billion and interest payments cracking \$12 billion a year, which at the end of the day—which the speaker did mention—will be crowding out services going forward.

In my riding alone, the orthopaedic surgeons, in January and February of this year, were unable to do elective surgeries on hips and knees—so anybody who needed a knee or hip replacement surgery during those two months wasn't allowed to. The reason was, there was no money for it. Well, if this government keeps spending money the way they're doing, there won't be any money for any surgeries, going down the road. That's quite a concern for the people of my riding.

Instead, this government decides in this budget to roll out their pension payroll tax that's going forward. They'll argue that it's not a tax. They can create the words how they want to, but taking money from somebody without their permission is either thievery or a tax, and on this government side, we'll balance which way it goes.

The other thing this government is going towards is selling off part of hydro in order to put the money towards infrastructure. To me, that's like selling your house and keeping the mortgage. I don't think there's anybody in this House who would sell their house and keep their mortgage in moving on. This is what this government is doing with this asset sale. They're not putting the money towards paying down the debt, which would reduce rates in our province. Instead, they're

taking that money and throwing it into infrastructure, particularly in the Toronto area, which has no benefit at all to the people of Elgin–Middlesex–London.

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

Mr. Wayne Gates: I'd like to stand up and talk about the budget, but I'm going to talk about something that I think is very important, not only to my riding but certainly to Liberals' ridings right across the province of Ontario, and that's the auto industry. Going back to 2009, when I was at the bargaining table during the auto sector crisis, where the PCs were very clear and said, "Let the industry fail," we ended up coming together, including the federal Conservatives, the provincial Liberals and the Obama administration, on making sure that the industry didn't fail. We protected tens of thousands of jobs, both in the plant and the spinoff jobs.

The problem that you have with the budget is that you're going to sell off the shares, and that's a big, big mistake. I don't believe for a minute that what transpired in Oshawa last week—which happened less than a week after the federal government said they're going to sell their shares because they want to balance their budget and then the Liberal government sold their shares because they wanted to get close to balancing their budget or use that money for whatever. Here's what has happened since that time. A week later, 1,000 workers—listen to this; instead of talking about this, because this is important for the province of Ontario—are losing their jobs. They're going to lose their jobs in October and November.

The Liberal government was told very clearly by the leader of Unifor, Jerry Dias, "Don't sell those shares." You need to be at the table. You need to make sure that you're going to have a say in future investment in Oshawa, future investment in St. Catharines, future investment in Ingersoll and future investment in Ontario. When 1,000 people lose their jobs, who doesn't pay taxes? Anybody know here? Those workers don't pay taxes.

It made a big, big mistake in getting rid of the shares in General Motors. I really think they should reconsider that.

The last thing I want to do, real quick—I've got four seconds—privatizing hydro. I had the tourist industry—I guess I've got to sit down. I'll have to do that later.

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

Mr. Chris Ballard: Wow, the hyperbole has been thick and fast-flowing today.

I just want to take our attention back to some of the key things in this budget that residents of my riding of Newmarket–Aurora have told me are very important to the quality of their lives and their children's lives.

We start with renewing Ontario's Youth Jobs Strategy. The province is renewing that strategy by investing an additional \$250 million over the next two years, bringing the total investment in youth employment programs to more than \$565 million. That is on the tip of the tongues

of many of the people who live in my area, whose children are graduating from colleges and universities and will be able to take advantage of that.

I think we've heard from a few people who are quite delighted that 450 grocery store outlets will be able to sell beer. Craft breweries are a growth industry. We have one starting in my community of Newmarket. We have another, the well-established King Brewery, in the township next to me. It's a growth industry and I'm glad to see that we'll be supporting them.

The Jobs and Prosperity Fund, enhanced by \$200 million—and I've heard from businesspeople in my community. They know it will attract more business investments, it will spur innovation and create jobs. We're bringing the total in that fund to \$2.7 billion over 10 years.

But as I did yesterday, let me just flip to some of the comments that others have made here.

EACOM Timber Corp.—just to prove that it's not a Toronto-centric budget, there are billions that are going to be spent outside of this area. Amongst them is \$60 million in resource road funding for the coming year.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): That concludes our time for questions and comments. The member for Welland can now respond.

Ms. Cindy Forster: To the minister without portfolio: I thank you for your advocacy on the Brock University issue. It was on the books for three years and that was a welcome announcement to Jack Lightstone and to the university.

To the member from Elgin–Middlesex–London: I'm glad he raised the issue of cancellation of surgeries, because that's happening right now, as I speak, in Simcoe, Haldimand–Norfolk, Welland and Niagara Falls because of the CarePartners' strike and the failure of the government or the CCAC to actually intervene and make sure that these people get back to work so seniors and the most vulnerable patients are looked after.

To the member from Niagara Falls: He raises a good point. The NDP have been calling on the government, both at the provincial and federal level, for many, many years for a manufacturing strategy in this province. It has fallen on deaf ears for as many years as I've been following this.

To the member from Newmarket–Aurora: It's just a shell game. At the end of the day he says that there's been more investment in youth, but in fact there was \$47 million cut from the youth employment strategy, right out of the budget book.

My final remarks will be that the father of health care and the father of hydro—Tommy Douglas and Sir Adam Beck—would both roll over in their graves knowing of the great erosion of public health care in this province and of the plan to sell off public power.

Thank you so much for the opportunity, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Thank you very much. Pursuant to standing order 47(c), I am now required to interrupt the proceedings and announce that there has been more than six and one half hours of debate

on the motion for second reading of this bill. This debate will therefore be deemed adjourned unless the government House leader or his designate specifies otherwise.

Hon. James J. Bradley: No further debate at this time.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): No further debate at this time.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

ROYAL ASSENT SANCTION ROYALE

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I beg to inform the House that in the name of Her Majesty the Queen, Her Honour the Lieutenant Governor has been pleased to assent to certain bills in her office.

The Clerk-at-the-Table (Ms. Tonia Grannum): The following are the titles of the bills to which Her Honour did assent:

An Act to protect child performers in the live entertainment industry and the recorded entertainment industry / Loi visant à protéger les enfants artistes dans l'industrie du spectacle vivant et l'industrie du spectacle enregistré.

An Act to protect pupils with asthma / Loi protégeant les élèves asthmatiques.

An Act to proclaim the month of October as Hispanic Heritage Month / Loi proclamant le mois d'octobre Mois du patrimoine hispanique.

An Act to require the establishment of the Ontario Retirement Pension Plan / Loi exigeant l'établissement du Régime de retraite de la province de l'Ontario.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I also beg to inform the House that pursuant to standing order 98(c), a change has been made in the order of precedence on the ballot list for private members' public business such that Ms. Campbell assumes ballot item number 58 and Miss Taylor assumes ballot item number 61.

1700

Orders of the day.

2015 ONTARIO BUDGET

Resuming the debate adjourned on May 5, 2015, on the motion that this House approves in general the budgetary policy of the government.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate? I recognize the member for Beaches–East York.

Mr. Arthur Potts: Thank you, Speaker. It is a great pleasure for me to stand to speak to this particular motion, that the House approves in general the budgetary policy of the government of Ontario.

What we are in a sense doing here is we're confirming a path that we set out on almost a year ago. On May 7, 2014, the writ was dropped for a general election in the

province of Ontario. It was a general election that was premised on the defeat or the lack of support for a budget that came forward in May that did not get the support of the House. It was a budget that we all knew was extremely progressive, and we were very disappointed in many quarters that the members opposite did not support that bill and we went to a general election. Of course, Mr. Speaker, as I have said before, I'm delighted to have had the opportunity to campaign on that budget bill, because it resulted in this opportunity for me to be in the House today.

Applause.

Mr. Arthur Potts: Thank you, sir. I appreciate it very much.

We've heard so much in this House over the last motion about expanding the ownership piece in hydro. We take to the point. People say that's not—we're not saying we're selling it. Of course, we're not selling the entire entity. We're selling a portion of the equity in it, a 60% portion, and maintaining control, maintaining—

Interjection: Shares.

Mr. Arthur Potts: —shares, of course, in it. And we continue to be a major shareholder in that entity.

We spoke yesterday, and in a two-minute response, I had a chance to talk a little bit about the economics. If you do follow the money associated with selling off a piece of the asset, the shares in that commodity, it does return \$800 million a year. If you understand the importance of a steady revenue stream, this is what gives it the value that allows us to unlock an asset in order to create greater value.

Those of you who have had a chance to spend some time in the business world know, for instance, if you were to build a storage unit on a piece of property and you fill that storage unit with paying customers who pay you on a monthly basis, you develop a revenue stream. The first thing you do as a smart operator is that you then finance that asset to the maximum you possibly can, because the stream of income covers off the cost associated with it, and then you use that asset that you've realized by opening up the value—you use that to invest in new projects.

This is precisely what we are doing with this bill. We're investing in new assets for the province of Ontario, particularly roads and bridges—

Interjection.

Mr. Arthur Potts: —roads and bridges that will help the member from Windsor, because we're going to get people to his community, into the centre part of Ontario, faster. It will be good for transport of goods and manufacturing services in his community. It will be good for jobs in his community. But they don't understand the central nature of economics.

Now, we are premising the sale and realizing a \$9-billion return of revenues—we are premising it on the basis of a 5.3% return, which is about a \$15-billion value. In essence, you can borrow money, and in your bank accounts you're only getting 1.5% or 2%. You ask yourself, what would happen if the investors, when they

looked at that first tranche, thought, “What an amazing deal,” 5.3% on their money? We might recognize, in fact, they might be satisfied with 4% return on their money, because 4% is a lot better than the 1.5% or 1.6% we’re getting on our savings accounts. If the people of Ontario should embrace that opportunity, then that 4% return would actually generate a value of this company in the order of \$20 billion. If we were to sell and realize the revenue associated with 60% of that, that would return \$12 billion in new revenue that we could then use to expand in transit, rail access.

This is extraordinarily important, that we do follow the money, that we do realize the value on this steady income stream by putting that asset into more productive purposes elsewhere.

I’ve heard so much from the other side of the House about the 10% ownership piece. Well, let’s be very clear. In our proposed section 48.2, it says very clearly, “Where any person or entity or combination of persons or entities acting jointly or in concert beneficially owns or exercises control or direction over more than 10 per cent of any class ... of voting shares, Hydro One Inc. shall promptly take steps under its articles of incorporation to remedy the situation.” This tells us that we will maintain absolute control on the general directions, and we will realize values.

I’d like to turn over some more time to the member from Kitchener Centre.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I’m pleased to recognize the member for Kitchener Centre.

Ms. Daiene Vernile: I’m very delighted to join the debate today on Bill 91, the 2015 Ontario budget. As you know, the document is called Building Ontario Up. The overall theme of this budget is that we are tackling really big issues that matter to the people of Ontario, and we are showing leadership.

I’m very enthused to see that this budget is not only building Ontario up, but specifically in my riding of Kitchener Centre and the region of Waterloo there are many great initiatives. I want to tell you about a few of these, Mr. Speaker. They’re right in the budget for my community.

Now, I have sat down, and I’ve listened to the people of my riding: municipal leaders, those in the tech sector, people in advanced manufacturing, social services and our universities and colleges. They have told me that this is a very progressive budget. They want to see it passed. People in my riding and all over Ontario are going to begin to benefit from the infrastructure investments and other announcements that are there.

In my riding, the government has committed \$300 million for the construction of the LRT. It’s now under way. The ION is going to be the region’s rapid transit system. It’s scheduled for completion in 2017, and I look forward to taking that first ride.

We have committed to \$2.1 billion to the Kitchener rail line to bring all-day, two-way GO train service to our region from Toronto.

Last fall, we announced that we purchased 53 kilometres of track between Kitchener and Georgetown, and

we’re negotiating with CP and CN for track acquisition or other considerations to continue that from Georgetown to Toronto.

Mr. Speaker, despite some misinformation being spun by negative voices trying to confuse the facts, I’m happy to report to you that our plan to deliver on that commitment for increased GO train service to our region within a 10-year time frame is right on track. To the people who are watching at home, I say to you, look beyond the negativity that you have been hearing from some voices in our community. I have had assurances from both our Premier and our transportation minister that our region is a priority and that we are on schedule to bring more trains to our region.

So what is happening between now and then? Why does it take 10 years? Well, we’re addressing grade separation, station modifications, track and signal additions and all the other important work that’s necessary to meet this goal. There’s a whole team of engineers working behind the scenes at MTO that are looking at this right now. We’re delivering a plan while those cynical voices are delivering pessimism and they have no plan.

We’re also going to be breaking ground later this year for the Highway 7 expansion from Kitchener to Guelph.

For our education partners, we’re investing \$15 million in the new Lazaridis Institute for the Management of Technology Enterprises at Wilfrid Laurier University. Private investors are going to kick in \$20 million in that project. After the budget was announced, I had a chat with the president of WLU, Max Blouw, and he’s thrilled. He wants to see this passed.

In my community, Communitech, a hub that supports tech business people to start and grow their business ideas, is continuing to receive support from our government. Since starting in 2006, they have helped launch—and I’m not kidding—1,800 new tech businesses equaling thousands of jobs. If you talk to the head of Communitech, Iain Klugman, he will tell you that he wants to see the budget passed. He likes this kind of investment, and he knows that it has triggered a profound transformation in my community.

I do want to wrap up by saying that municipal leaders, business people, those in higher education, social services and everyday folks from my region—they are watching. They’re watching the way that we’re going to be voting—in particular, MPPs from my region. They want to see this budget passed.

They want to know, do they support transit expansion? Do they support education investments, support for our social services? Or are you going to say no to supporting your community? They’re watching, and I’m watching. I’ll be sure to let them know how they voted on supporting Kitchener-Waterloo and all of Ontario.

We’re committed to building Ontario up. A vote for this budget is a vote for the future of our province.

1710

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments? The member for Prince Edward-Hastings.

Mr. Todd Smith: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for recognizing me. The member opposite who just wrapped up not only resembles the Premier in her appearance, but her remarks also follow closely in line with what the Premier says day in and day out.

As a matter of fact, she said her municipal leaders are watching with interest to see what's happening, and her businesses are watching with interest. I can tell you that my municipal leaders and my business community are watching with interest as well.

The message has been resoundingly clear: This is a bad-news budget for the province of Ontario, particularly in rural Ontario. Ask anybody in rural Ontario if there's anything in this budget for them, and they'll question what the government is smoking, because there's nothing in this for rural Ontario.

I'm going to have an opportunity to speak for 20 minutes on the budget motion in just a couple of minutes, after we get through the questions and comments, but I can tell you it was quite simple on this side of the Legislature: We were asking to see five things in the budget that came out a couple of weeks ago. We didn't see any of the five. As a matter of fact, some of them went entirely in the opposite direction of what we need to see, to get Ontario back on track again.

When I arrived in the Legislature, four years ago now, the budget deficit was virtually the same as it is now. This government has done nothing to improve the financial situation. Businesses are continuing to leave the province at a record pace, because electricity prices are going through the roof. It's the biggest issue—that this government failed to recognize in its budget—in rural and eastern Ontario.

I look forward to the opportunity to bring 20 minutes of very valuable, insightful remarks in just a couple of minutes, here in the Legislature.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I know you're looking forward to it.

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

Mr. Percy Hatfield: I'd like to make comments. The member from Beaches–East York was talking about his concerns over a steady revenue stream, so I want to talk about one of the steady revenue streams here.

They're going to start selling beer in grocery stores. I used to be a reporter. In 1985, I went around the province on the bus with David Peterson. One of his biggest promises was selling beer and wine in corner stores. Thirty years later, it's still a broken Liberal promise.

I'm not opposed to this, but let me sound a warning. Let me tell you about the Quebec example. Putting beer and wine in Quebec stores caused a devastating effect to the spirits industry in Quebec. Before beer and wine went into the stores in Quebec, the spirits industry enjoyed a 40% share of the alcohols market. Since the sales went in, spirits—rum, whisky, rye, vodka—dropped from 40% down to 13%. That led to closures of a number of Quebec distillers and the loss of hundreds of jobs.

Distilled spirits come from Ontario farms. They're Ontario grains grown by Ontario farmers. Ontario jobs

are on the thin edge of this budget if you don't treat the spirits industry fairly when you're talking about expansion of the markets for beer and wine and if you stick to limiting the sales of spirits.

Just to give you an example of a steady revenue stream, there is a billion dollars a year or more, that comes from the sale of spirits, that goes into the Ontario treasury. If you want to put that on the line, go ahead and do it at your own peril, but you must treat the spirits industry fairly if you proceed with your plan to put beer in grocery stores.

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

Mr. Grant Crack: It's certainly a pleasure to follow the very eloquent remarks of the members from Beaches–East York and Kitchener Centre concerning that great budget that was just presented by the Minister of Finance about 10 days ago, or something like that.

One of the issues that I hear about constantly from the members of the opposition—both parties—is hydro rates. I want to talk about hydro rates, especially with reference to page 361 of the budget. We all remember, as I'm sure the Minister of Agriculture and Food remembers, the Conservatives when they restructured the electricity sector in Ontario—

Interjection.

Mr. Grant Crack: Well, I remember it well. The Conservative government allowed the electricity sector to build up a \$37-billion debt.

Interjection: Grant, say it isn't so.

Mr. Grant Crack: It was \$37 billion, Minister.

At the same time, they came up with this idea to restructure the electricity sector, and in doing so, they created the OPG—Ontario Power Generation—the Ontario Power Authority and Hydro One. We all know that. Under their restructuring, they couldn't come up with \$7.5 billion, so they created a stranded debt, which has been on our electricity bills since 1999. The original stranded debt, in 1999, was \$7.8 billion. In 2003, when they froze the rates—the Conservatives froze the rates. They were trying to fool Ontarians about the real cost of electricity. They froze them, which resulted in an increase of about \$4 billion in the stranded debt, so it went up to \$11.5 billion.

In this budget, what we're going to do is, we're going to be taking the stranded debt component off your bills, off all the residential bills for the people of Ontario. That's a good-news item in this budget.

I'm proud of this budget, as are all of my colleagues, Speaker.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): The mood of the House is rather jovial this afternoon, and it's very pleasant for those of us who are listening. But I still have to be able to hear the speaker, so I just caution members to lower the decibel level just a bit.

We still have one more opportunity for questions and comments. The member for Elgin–Middlesex–London.

Mr. Jeff Yurek: I enjoy the member on the opposite side and the way he proceeded to try to bring up the

straw man in this debate. The real fact of the matter is that debt in this province is going up to \$300 billion, and the interest payments are going to crack \$12 billion. That's \$12 billion that isn't going to any programming in this province; it's just going to pay the interest on the \$300-billion debt.

To me, that is a way to drive services out of this province. As I mentioned earlier, the fact is that orthopaedic surgery was cancelled for two months in my riding because of this government's mismanagement and waste throughout the years: \$2 billion for eHealth, \$1 billion for the smart meters, \$1 billion on the gas plants.

Where does it stop? When is this government going to realize that you just can't continue to spend your way into prosperity? It does not happen in this province. What happens is too much money is tacked on to the debt.

The member from Etobicoke Centre's sister had a baby today. Unfortunately, that baby has been born into \$23,000 of debt. The first moment she took a breath, she was \$23,000 in debt, and with this government continuing going forward with budgets like this, it's only going to increase.

I feel sorry for the next generation going up because the services that we enjoy today will not be there for them, because this government will not take the right path and ensure that the debt and deficit get under control. Instead, this government wants to play around and move items through smoke and mirrors and tell the people of this province that there are no new taxes.

They can seriously look at me without smiling and say that there are no new taxes in this budget. We've got the cap and trade, we've got the payroll tax, we've got an increase in the aviation fuel tax, we've got a new beer tax—come on, really. You guys are—

Interjection.

Mr. Jeff Yurek: He's yelling about my hospital, Elgin General. A re-announcement from when I first ran in 2011; that was when the announcement really first came out. But of course, during this budget period—I'm running out of time—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): One of the government members who spoke has the opportunity to respond.

I recognize the member for Kitchener Centre.

1720

Ms. Daiene Vernile: I want to start by thanking the member for Beaches–East York for his comments; the member from Prince Edward–Hastings—yes, I thank even you; the member for Windsor–Tecumseh, whom I know very well; the member for Glengarry–Prescott–Russell, who has just disappeared; and the member for Elgin–Middlesex–London.

Now, the member for Prince Edward–Hastings made the remark that I seem to resemble the Premier. I want to thank you very much for that. I think it's always a great compliment to be compared to people who are intelligent, thoughtful and forward-thinking, so thank you for that.

Speaking of forward-thinking, I would like to transition us back to our budget. It has four pillars, and you've

heard these. It's starting with the investment in infrastructure and transportation. We're also investing in people's skills. We're focusing on dynamic innovation and business. This is very important to the people in my riding of Kitchener Centre, where we have seen an investment in our tech community from this government and we have seen an explosion in the tech sector of thousands of jobs. And we're making sure that all Ontarians have retirement security. All of these investments are looking at building Ontario up.

The cornerstone of our values is the reason why I decided to join this team. It is a commitment to a very fair society. I've heard lots of people talking about different things having to do with infrastructure and other aspects of the budget, but for me, what I'm concerned about is our concern that we have for helping people who are in need.

To sum up, I would like to remind everyone that our community leaders who are leading our municipalities, people in business, people in social services, are watching us. They're watching in my community of Kitchener Centre. They're watching how all of us in Ontario are going to be reflecting on this.

I hope that we can positively pass this budget.

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

Mr. Todd Smith: It's a pleasure to join the debate on the budget motion here this afternoon.

I don't know where to begin except to say to the member from Kitchener Centre that you will pass the budget because you have a majority government, so there's not much question about that. But it's our duty as the official opposition and the third party to enlighten the people of Ontario about the shortcomings in this Ontario budget.

Yesterday I actually had the opportunity, during the lunch hour, to visit the Canadian Club of Toronto down at the Hilton. I had a lovely meal down there and listened to a finance minister who is actually taking the country in the proper direction—that would be “Joe the Balancer,” the Minister of Finance, Joe Oliver, who hails from right here in Eglinton–Lawrence; he's the member for Eglinton–Lawrence. He balanced the budget, and yesterday talked about how we're taking the country in the right direction, but it's this province that keeps dragging down the national economy.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I'm going to ask the member for Essex to please come to order. I'm going to ask the minister responsible for tourism and recreation to come to order, and then I hopefully will be able to hear the member for Prince Edward–Hastings.

Mr. Todd Smith: And I'm not generally a quiet guy, Mr. Speaker, so I'm surprised that you were having difficulty, but my colleagues are very excitable here this afternoon.

As I was saying, “Joe the Balancer,” as he's been dubbed on Parliament Hill, has set the country in the right direction. But it's this government—and this

Minister of Finance and this Premier who continue to be the albatross around the neck of Confederation.

As I was saying earlier, when I arrived here four years ago, the deficit was \$12.5 billion—you'll remember that, Speaker. So what's happened since? We got it down to \$9 billion, \$9.5 billion, and the next year it went to \$10.5 billion and now it's back up to \$10.9 billion. We're headed in the wrong direction. So while the federal government was getting it right, bringing our costs in line and ensuring we could be one of the most competitive countries in the entire world, our province continues to go in the opposite direction and drag down the national economy.

Do you know the third-largest area of expenditure in this budget, Mr. Speaker? It wasn't in health care. It wasn't in education. It wasn't in social services. It was in interest on the debt, increasing by 5.7% in this budget. We've talked at length in this House about the Auditor General's report and the fact that if we continue to build our debt bigger and bigger and bigger, the interest payments are going to go higher and higher and higher. What does that mean? We're going to start crowding out the programs that are so important to our most vulnerable people in Ontario. That's what has been happening. That's what has been happening in Ontario.

We now spend more on interest on the debt than we do on energy, infrastructure, transportation, universities, and community and social services. All of those ministries are spending more on interest on the debt. The \$54 million that the federal government transferred to the province for health care has all but disappeared. For me and my constituents that would be and could be a new hospital in Prince Edward county, in Picton, or a lot of new equipment and a lot of new beds in the old hospital.

I've been advocating, as you do, Mr. Speaker, when you're sitting in your chair, for highways and roads and infrastructure in our communities, but that wasted money isn't going to any of those projects. We could build five Rednersville Roads with that \$54 million. We could build that five times. That's a road that stretches across the north shore of Prince Edward county.

The debt and deficit are now costing us the things that we care about, with the AG again telling us last year that we have a government that has decided that instead of fixing the problem, they've continued on this same reckless path that we're on.

The Premier and the members of the government over there want you to believe that the government has to spend outrageous amounts of money in order to deliver services, that it has to employ thousands of people who never see a patient and have never seen a patient in order to deliver health care. That was one of the asks that we had leading up to the budget this year: streamlining our home care, streamlining the delivery of health care in the province of Ontario.

We now have the local health integration networks, and we've been talking about the LHINs for a long time and the fact that it's an added layer of bureaucracy. We have 14 LHINs. We have 14 community care access

centres, the CCACs that are delivering a service as well, but require an administration and another form of bureaucracy. Now we have the community health links that were reintroduced in this budget—69 of those across the province. It seems like every time the government stands up, absolutely, they're spending more money on health care. But are they doing it properly? Are they doing it wisely? Are they streamlining the service? Clearly, they're not. They continue to add more and more bureaucracy.

The government said in the 2014-15 budget that it expected to need only \$3.1 billion from asset sales in order to fund its infrastructure program. They keep saying that it needs to sell Hydro One, because it can't balance the books any other way. That's an important point. Not a dime of the sale of Hydro One is actually going to infrastructure. Remember: Last year, they said they needed \$3.1 billion from asset sales. This year, it's saying that it needs the \$4 billion from the sale of Hydro One, plus the money from the sale of government real estate in order to finance its infrastructure program.

Our finance critic, the member from Nipissing, has done an excellent job of holding the Minister of Finance and the Premier and the government's feet to the fire on this issue, because they're misleading the public when they say they're taking the money from Hydro One and using it for infrastructure. Clearly, they're not.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): I'd ask the member to stand and withdraw the word that starts with an "m."

Mr. Todd Smith: Absolutely, I withdraw.

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

Mr. Percy Hatfield: What was the word?

Mr. Todd Smith: I'm not sure either, but I'm sure he'll tell me later.

I forget where I was, but—

Interjection: Start all over.

Mr. Todd Smith: Should I start from the beginning, Mr. Speaker? No, okay, okay.

The thing is that we're obviously headed in the wrong direction when it comes to the sale of Hydro One—that's where I was. What they are doing is changing the laws around the sale of Hydro One. According to the Electricity Act, they are supposed to be using the proceeds of the sale of Hydro One to pay down the debt that the member from Glengarry–Prescott–Russell was talking about earlier, that \$27 billion in debt. They're not doing that.

1730

What they're doing is selling off a very profitable asset and not using the proceeds the way that they should, because if they did start to pay down that debt we would start to see lower hydro rates. I will get to that a little bit later on.

The thing is, you can only sell these assets once. There have been mistakes made along the way, but selling Hydro One will only lower the deficit for one year. Next year, you've already spent the money that you got from the sale, you haven't fixed the underlying problem with

the deficit and now you're getting a smaller dividend from Hydro One because you have a smaller ownership stake in Hydro One.

The government, it appears, is hoping that it can make up the money through either increased economic activity or by selling more beer, neither of which is exactly a promising plan for balancing the books in the province. Clearly, what we're seeing is that the price of hydro continues to rise, which is going to make us less profitable. It's going to create more of an exodus to southern states.

We had the perfect example of what's happening in all of our rural ridings. That was illustrated this morning by the member from Haldimand–Norfolk, who talked about the fact that one of the manufacturers in his riding is being lured away with the carrot-dangling of three cents per kilowatt hour, an industrial power rate in a southern US state. We all, on this side of the House—and the member from St. Thomas is here—know that the manufacturing sector has been hollowed out and, in large part, won't be able to return because of the increasing costs of electricity in the province.

In 2003, when this government took power, we had the lowest hydro rates in North America. Now, 12 years later, we have the highest all-in hydro rates in North America.

The member from Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington is a very studious lad. He went out and had the legislative library look at the all-in cost of hydro for all 10 Canadian provinces. By far, the price in Ontario is the highest—three times what it is in the province of Quebec.

It's a problem, and there's nothing in this budget that's going to address that. As a matter of fact, on May 1, May Day, it indeed was “mayday” last Friday, when the price per kilowatt increased by 15% right across the province.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: It's Cinco de Mayo today.

Mr. Todd Smith: It is Cinco de Mayo. Happy Cinco de Mayo to you, Percy.

Normally in this province, when the dollar is down you notice that our economic activity increases because we're exporting more of our manufactured goods into the US. The problem with that is that we've lost 300,000 manufacturing jobs over the last 10 years in the province. Most of that is directly related to a steady and then astronomical increase in those hydro rates during that same time period.

In what will apparently come as a shock only to members of the government, manufacturing is an electricity-intensive process in Ontario. Many plants run on continental shifts, which means they're running 24 hours a day. That means they're being charged rates at-peak, mid-peak and off-peak. The government's attempts to fix its energy mistakes by manipulating prices and trying to engineer when we manufacture and when we do laundry aren't working. They aren't helping anything. As a matter of fact, we just saw 1,000 jobs leave General Motors in Oshawa. We've seen Kellogg's, Caterpillar, John Deere, Heinz and dozens of others pull up stakes

and leave Ontario. Two weeks ago, we saw Goodyear turn its back on building a new facility in Napanee. The reason was because of the soaring costs of electricity and—not just that—the instability of the electricity system in Ontario.

The government's electricity policies have made it all but impossible to generate the kind of economic activity that we would need to balance the budget. Again, on the Goodyear Napanee situation, they didn't leave for Quebec; they left for Mexico.

We have a budget without a credible plan to balance that is privatizing assets, that's relying on economic activity it has successfully driven out of the province and on an increase in beer sales in supposedly 450 grocery stores across the province.

To be sure, electricity is a major reason that these manufacturers are leaving, but it's not the only one. Businesses are constantly looking to operate more efficiently. They're looking for more cost-effective ways to do business and more business-friendly jurisdictions. Capital is more mobile than it has ever been in the province's history. The government's solution to this has been to repeatedly make it more expensive to do business here. We've watched the Green Energy Act produce the highest electricity rates. Now businesses in the province are being hit with a double whammy in this budget. On the one hand, they'll be expected to pay a new payroll tax that the government is trying to pass off as a pension plan, from which few people will actually benefit.

The next thing manufacturers are going to be hit with is a cap-and-trade tax; that is, unless they or their industry have hired expensive Liberal lobbyists to make them exempt from this new program, or they pull up stakes and move elsewhere.

Ultimately, all cap-and-trade systems become a lobbyists' dream, because there are always loopholes written in that exempt certain industries, or increase the number of credits they have, or do whatever the government can do to engineer the credit market in favour of whoever has the best lobbyist. This keeps cap and trade from being effective.

But the other thing that ends up occurring—and this was raised in the pages of the *Globe and Mail* over the weekend—is that it ends up incentivizing manufacturers to move their more carbon-intensive operations to other jurisdictions that don't have cap and trade so that they can stay under the cap. They do that so they can sell their remaining carbon credits on the market and increase the profit margin for the company, which has little impact on greenhouse gas emissions here in Ontario.

What you have is yet another Liberal policy whose major result will likely be offshoring thousands more jobs that used to be right here in Ontario. What we have is a measure that makes it more expensive to produce in the province, and a measure that makes it more expensive to hire in Ontario—this, while the government is relying on increased economic activity to help it balance the books. The government's own advisers in the Ministry of Finance have stated that they expect these measures to cost the economy of the province thousands of jobs.

But let's get back to the deficit and why it's not going away.

What we've done is highlight the problem with planning on an increase in revenue by continually adding taxes to businesses. This is because Ontario doesn't have a revenue problem. Year over year, Ontario continually sets new records for how much revenue the government brings in. What we have is a results problem, not even a straight spending problem. We're spending too much money on things that don't deliver value. Instead of trying to reform the system to deliver better, more cost-effective results, we're crowding out government priorities to pay for an ever-growing debt load.

As a result, we have a government that has laid off 400 nurses province-wide, including 58 registered nurses—at my hospitals; in my riding—at Quinte Health Care. That's hospitals in Picton, Belleville, Trenton, North Hastings and Bancroft. As a result, we have \$54 million in federal transfers for health care that isn't going to health care.

As a result, we now have thousands of kids out of class in Durham, Peel and northern Ontario, and we're probably going to have thousands and thousands more out of class on Monday.

People don't get angry when the government does too much, but they do get angry when the government does too many things poorly, and that's what this government has done. Rather than trying to get the fundamentals right, they think the solution is to simply spend more money; it's to spend \$130 billion on transit and transportation; it is to announce that it's going to open beer kiosks in supermarkets.

Over the last few decades, the people of this province have made it clear, what they want the government to do. They want the government to provide quality health care. They want good roads, and they want them taken care of. They want good schools for their kids, and they want their kids to be able to get jobs at the end of their education.

We have a few basic and fundamental trusts that we are not only expected to deliver, but the public will demand that we deliver them. On many of those scores, this budget and this government are failing the province. The worst part is, this government pretends it either isn't occurring, or it criticizes those who point out that it is.

I've never seen a Premier so blatantly criticize the province's Auditor General. When she points out there are problems with the province's fiscal plan, which she does every time she addresses the media, this Premier is always there or her energy minister is always there, criticizing her findings.

I've never seen a Premier who thinks that bringing up things that happened in 1999 or 2001, after her party has been in government for 12 years now—I've never seen anything like this. It forces me to ask how long you have to be in government before you actually have to take responsibility for what you've done over the past 12 years. In no private sector job could you consistently blame someone else for your mess-ups 12 years after the person left the job. This Premier does it almost religious-

ly. It's an article of absolute faith for this government that regardless of what they mess up or who criticizes them, they will either attack the source or they'll blame Mike Harris—or periodically Bob Rae, as well.

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Part of being a grown adult is the ability to take responsibility, but this government never takes responsibility for anything. The responsibility for the hollowing-out of Ontario's manufacturing sector falls squarely at the feet of this Premier, this government and the previous Premier. The responsibility for the mess that the electricity sector is in with regard to both customer service at Hydro One and the price explosion facing ratepayers lies squarely at the foot of this government. The responsibility for the fact that this government now has to pinch pennies in front-line health care and fire nurses lies squarely at the feet of this government. Those decisions are the direct result of this budget, of recent budgets and decisions made by this government that their pet projects are more important than nurses in Belleville, Trenton, Picton and North Bay.

Somewhere along the line, this government made the decision that it could ignore these public trusts, provided it never simply took the blame for it, or provided that it take on what occurred and receive the same credibility as that of an independent trier of fact, like the province's Auditor General. This government's idea of facts is often in conflict with reality, as we saw last week when the Auditor General released her report on winter road maintenance.

I could go on and on and on. This budget doesn't encounter a single problem that it can't ignore. In fact, it makes a number of the problems in Ontario worse.

Mr. Speaker, I thank you for your time this afternoon.

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

Mr. Taras Natyshak: I was pleased to listen to my colleague the member from Prince Edward-Hastings. He has a booming baritone voice that's easy to listen to; however, the content of his speech was vacuous at best. There was not much in there, and I'll tell you why: It is difficult for the PC Party to condemn any of the aspects of this budget—because essentially they are the same, ideologically speaking. They are very similar documents. They fire roughly the same amount of public servants. They cut roughly the same amount of public services. They extol the same virtues in terms of reducing the debt on the backs of working-class people.

He spoke about the virtues of the finance minister at the federal level, somebody who has taken on the veterans of this community, of our country—who has attacked veterans, on the backs of those who put their lives on the line. They're balancing the budget on the backs of the environment. They're degrading our environmental resources.

Guess what they're doing with employment insurance at the federal level? They are taking from that pot and putting it into the budgetary deficit, making their numbers come down. Guess where they got that playbook from?

Mr. Jeff Yurek: Where?

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Paul Martin and the Liberals. It's exactly the same plan. So it's very difficult for the PCs to criticize this budget—because they are essentially carbon copies of the same document that I would expect from the PCs. What we have here on May 5, Cinco de Mayo, on a historic day in this country when we will see Alberta turn a new page and welcome in the New Democratic Party—what we see is that playing out here in Ontario, where we have a semblance of the Wildrose Party and, of course, the mirror image of the PC Party. We will certainly be able to offer an alternative. We already have. What do we do? We just absolutely don't do what the government has done and what the PCs would do.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The Minister of Agriculture. It's almost like you were up speaking already.

Hon. Jeff Leal: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. First of all, I'd like to say I did listen to the speech from the member from Prince Edward–Hastings. I just want to get on the record today that I'm a member of the Hastings and Prince Edward Regiment regimental association. As you know, that very fine regiment, after they left Italy in December 1945, joined the First Canadian Army in Holland, and 70 years ago, the members of that regiment were instrumental in the liberation of the people in Holland, which is a very important historical moment for that regiment.

Last Friday, I had the wonderful opportunity to be in Belleville, Ontario. I'm very sad, as a Junior A hockey fan—my Peterborough Petes had one of the greatest rivalries in Ontario, with the Belleville Bulls. I went to the Yardmen Arena and I saw the Belleville Bulls logo there, and it almost brought a tear to my eye that they'll be leaving Belleville and going to your hometown, Mr. Speaker, of Hamilton, Ontario. As you know, one of the greatest players ever to come out of the Belleville Bulls is with my Montreal Canadiens: P.K. Subban, who played his junior hockey in Belleville. I think the member there was the radio voice of the Belleville Bulls when P.K. Subban was playing there.

Applause.

Hon. Jeff Leal: Thanks so much.

Let me get to his speech. I met with the mayor of Belleville last Friday: Mayor Taso Christopher. You know what he had to say to me? He said, "Jeff, your government is on the right track with that budget." He said, "You're investing in infrastructure. You're investing in skills. You're investing in the kind of things that Ontario needs." I said, "Mayor Christopher, I'll pass that on to my good friend the member for Prince Edward–Hastings, and I'll set up a lunch between you and the member so the mayor of Belleville can share the good news with the member for Prince Edward–Hastings."

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

Mr. Monte McNaughton: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's an honour again to speak, I think for the third time

today, to comment on the budget bill in front of us and to follow the comments of my friend in the NDP from Essex and, of course, the minister from Peterborough but most importantly from my colleague from Prince Edward–Hastings, who really did a very effective job of highlighting what is wrong with the budget bill and the budget this year presented by the Liberal government.

Of course, the member from Prince Edward–Hastings talked about the repercussions of 12 years of Liberal mismanagement, the waste and the scandal. It's catching up to the people of Ontario. We're losing the front-line services that every person in the province of Ontario, whether it's the mom and dad with young kids at home or the seniors on a fixed income—they're seeing, like the member from Prince Edward–Hastings said is happening in his community of Belleville, front-line cuts to hospitals.

I can tell you, Speaker, that in Lambton–Kent–Middlesex, my riding, there are three rural hospitals. There's one in Newbury, which is Four Counties Health Services; one in Wallaceburg, the Sydenham hospital; and in Strathroy, Strathroy Middlesex General Hospital. All those communities are faced with front-line health care cuts as well as in the long-term-care homes. There's no investment by this Liberal government, and the budget didn't do anything to deal with that issue as well, Speaker.

I want to highlight the one economic issue that I continue to hear about by far the most in Lambton–Kent–Middlesex: that of hydro bills and the skyrocketing costs of energy. It's something that this government has been ignoring for years and years, but they have to deal with this issue at some point in the near future.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Windsor–Tecumseh.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: Let me surprise everyone. I want to say something good about the budget—not that I'm going to support it. They're putting money in It's Never Okay: An Action Plan to Stop Sexual Violence and Harassment.

Nine years ago, a priest, Father Charlie Sylvestre, pled guilty to 47 counts of sexual abuse. A friend of mine, Mary Ann Mulhern, wrote a book of poems about that. Let me read a couple.

Nine-Year-Old Girls

to the prosecutor
the priest blamed
nine-year-old girls
after all, it was
short skirts they wore
to school
how they sat on chairs
long dangle of legs
their mouths open
to receive communion
pink tongues
soft and moist

Can't Be Right

in the rectory
 it's a party
 chocolate bars and pop
 loud music
 the beatles
 maxwell's silver hammer
 one tin soldier
 stay awhile
 two classmates
 fold Sunday bulletins
 at the oak table
 in the hall
 Father Charlie lifts me
 onto his lap
 in his big black chair
 beneath a window
 with red velvet drapes
 he says he'll be my favourite uncle
 that I'm special

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he points to his cheek
 a kiss
 points to his lips
 a kiss
 points to his tongue
 I try to move away
 his arms became a trap
 hands move
 under my blouse
 beneath my skirt
 inside where it
 doesn't feel right
 can't be right
 must be right

he's Father

Speaker, this is a great book of poetry by Mary Ann Mulhern. It brings to life the 47 counts of the women who were abused.

I thank the government for putting money into this budget. This is Sexual Assault Prevention Month. There is an action plan in there with money to stop things like this happening in the future. I thank you for your time this afternoon.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Prince Edward–Hastings has two minutes.

Mr. Todd Smith: Thanks to the members of the Legislature from Windsor–Tecumseh and Essex. We'll be watching Alberta tonight as well to see if the NDP can do any better than they did in Prince Edward Island last night, just to see. I don't believe they got a single seat in PEI. I think they will fare better in Alberta.

To the member from Peterborough: Thanks for the comments on the Hasty Ps, obviously a huge part of our history in Belleville and in Hastings and Prince Edward counties, and in Peterborough too. Of course, it brought

more than a tear to my eye when the Belleville Bulls announced that they were leaving.

Also thanks to member from Lambton–Kent–Middlesex.

I can tell you that while I wasn't at the OSUM conference, the Ontario Small Urban Municipalities conference, on Friday, I was there on Wednesday, and I had the opportunity to address some of the delegates who were there. I'm going to have to check with Mayor Taso Christopher to see if what the member from Peterborough actually said is accurate.

But I can tell you that the member from Northumberland–Quinte West—his mayor in Quinte West was very unimpressed with the Premier. As a matter of fact, it was even in the newspaper how unimpressed he was with the budget and with the Premier's announcements on the day that she was there on Friday.

I can tell you that the warden of Hastings county—I have the newspaper report right here. Warden Rick Phillips: unimpressed. He says there's "not a lot of substance" there, when speaking of our Premier. He also said there's a lack of real government action on the rural municipal infrastructure file.

There's a lot of flowery language, is the way they put it, to summarize. There are a lot of sweet-sounding items in the budget, but there's no content behind these issues. That's why we won't be supporting the budget this time around.

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

Mr. Wayne Gates: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you for allowing me to speak here today.

I'm very excited to stand here and speak about this so-called progressive budget. This is a budget that is supposed to represent this party governing from the activist centre. The problem is, as many representatives have pointed out in this House, this budget is anything but progressive. This is a budget that is filled with senseless cuts that hurt the people of this great province.

When we think of being progressive, we think of providing proper health care to the people of this province, making sure that our education sector is strong, not on strike, and working well and ensuring that the residents of this province have every chance to grow and develop that they can.

When I look at this budget, there are major concerns that jump out right away. Let's talk about what's missing from the budget for the people of my riding, in Niagara Falls. The big one is GO train. During the last election—and the Liberals should listen to this—when the Liberal Party was trying to get votes, they said bringing GO train to Niagara was a high, high priority. Do you know who said that? The Premier of Ontario.

I'm sure, as you're all well aware, the chair of the Liberal cabinet, the MPP from St. Catharines, Mr. Bradley himself, said that he could see GO train coming to Niagara Falls in 2015. For 21,000 commuters who make their way to Hamilton every single day, this would be great news. It would be great news for the 50,000

people who travel from Niagara to the GO station areas that service Toronto.

This is also important. It's important that you listen to this: Manufacturers like General Motors and Airbus Helicopters could be happy knowing that the QEW would be less congested and that transportation routes would be clear.

The tourist industry was happy to know that visitors from Toronto could come and spend the weekend in Niagara Falls. The wine industry in Niagara-on-the-Lake—I know some of your ministers were there last week. Places like the Caroline winery, Two Sisters and Ravine could expand their booming businesses by bringing in international tourists. Award-winning craft breweries like Silversmith and Oast would have a chance to get their incredible product to an even wider audience.

I know the minister is here.

The racetrack in Fort Erie could thrive on new visitors, and it would be easier for people who will want to come when the Canadian Motor Speedway project is completed.

You can see that my entire riding is looking for GO Transit, yet when you pick up and read the 2015-16 budget, there is absolutely nothing in there for GO Transit to Niagara Falls. To think a government might say one thing to get elected and then change their mind when they actually start governing—I want you to listen to this, because I can defend this: Now we're told that they're waiting for a business case from Niagara, and I thought that was fair. They've been given that business case, and I believe it's a very strong case for a cost-efficient way to clear the QEW and for the environmental minister, who is here, to get cars off the road and bring development to Niagara. Yet we haven't heard anything—no new announcement, no new funding—nothing. The budget continues to have a hole in it.

The people in my riding have presented a case to this Legislature. It's a case for economic development, an environmental case and a public transportation case. In all of these cases, the province benefits from what is a very small portion of the budget. Yet that isn't there. The people of Niagara, hoping to utilize this transportation, were completely left out. The entire Niagara region, for the first time in years, is united behind this. There's no reason this can't be in there. For the amount of economic activity it would bring to the region and to the province as a whole, it should be your first page, but it's not even in your footnotes.

There are a lot of things in the budget that I disagree with—that most progressives disagree with—but there are also a lot of concerns over what is not in the budget.

Of course, the budget is about deficit reduction, and that's absolutely important. As the provincial government, we need to be fiscally responsible. We can't be dropping a debt onto our children and our grandchildren that they have no way of paying off. There are a number of things we can do right away to chip away at this deficit.

Interjections.

Mr. Wayne Gates: Please listen to this, rather than talk, because it's important.

Just look at the Auditor General's report, which shows that this province overpaid \$8 billion—that's a "b"—by using P3s instead of publicly funded models. In Niagara, the GO train would cost \$130 million. That's nothing compared to the \$8 billion lost on these P3s. If we want to balance the budget, we need to start by being financially responsible, by being transparent and accountable. These P3 projects have failed the people of this province, and they've wasted a lot of taxpayers' money.

I think I've got a couple of minutes left, Mr. Speaker.

This government may say that it's accountable and transparent, but all you have to do is look at the Auditor General's report on winter highway maintenance to see that it hasn't been happening. This government trusted a private contractor to clear our roads. There was very little oversight and almost no follow-up to make sure this job was being done properly. The report proves that the job wasn't being done. There was no accountability. For all of this danger that may have caused people in this province to lose their lives on our highways, this government saved over \$30 million. Is that what it's worth to put lives in this province at risk—\$30 million?

On top of that—listen to this—there are over 200 lawsuits pending against the province for injuries and death that have occurred on our highways. You could have saved more money by just having it publicly done, the same way they did in Manitoba—publicly run, publicly delivered. Their highways are safer and everything—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Thank you. You'll continue another day.

Debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): It's 6 o'clock. This House stands adjourned until 9 tomorrow morning.

The House adjourned at 1800.

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Hardeman, Ernie (PC)	Oxford	
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Hatfield, Percy (NDP)	Windsor–Tecumseh	
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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
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Malhi, Harinder (LIB)	Brampton–Springdale	
Mangat, Amrit (LIB)	Mississauga–Brampton South / Mississauga–Brampton-Sud	
Mantha, Michael (NDP)	Algoma–Manitoulin	
Martins, Cristina (LIB)	Davenport	
Martow, Gila (PC)	Thornhill	
Matthews, Hon. / L'hon. Deborah (LIB)	London North Centre / London- Centre-Nord	Deputy Premier / Vice-première ministre Minister Responsible for the Poverty Reduction Strategy / Ministre responsable de la Stratégie de réduction de la pauvreté President of the Treasury Board / Présidente du Conseil du Trésor
Mauro, Hon. / L'hon. Bill (LIB)	Thunder Bay–Atikokan	Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry / Ministre des Richesses naturelles et des Forêts
McDonell, Jim (PC)	Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry	
McGarry, Kathryn (LIB)	Cambridge	
McMahon, Eleanor (LIB)	Burlington	
McMeekin, Hon. / L'hon. Ted (LIB)	Ancaster–Dundas–Flamborough– Westdale	Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / Ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement
McNaughton, Monte (PC)	Lambton–Kent–Middlesex	
Meilleur, Hon. / L'hon. Madeleine (LIB)	Ottawa–Vanier	Attorney General / Procureure générale Minister Responsible for Francophone Affairs / Ministre déléguée aux Affaires francophones

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Milczyn, Peter Z. (LIB)	Etobicoke–Lakeshore	
Miller, Norm (PC)	Parry Sound–Muskoka	
Miller, Paul (NDP)	Hamilton East–Stoney Creek / Hamilton-Est–Stoney Creek	Third Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Troisième vice-président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Moridi, Hon. / L'hon. Reza (LIB)	Richmond Hill	Minister of Research and Innovation / Ministre de la Recherche et de l'Innovation Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities / Ministre de la Formation et des Collèges et Universités
Munro, Julia (PC)	York–Simcoe	Deputy Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjointe de l'opposition officielle
Murray, Hon. / L'hon. Glen R. (LIB)	Toronto Centre / Toronto-Centre	Minister of the Environment and Climate Change / Ministre de l'Environnement et de l'Action en matière de changement climatique
Naidoo-Harris, Indira (LIB)	Halton	
Naqvi, Hon. / L'hon. Yasir (LIB)	Ottawa Centre / Ottawa-Centre	Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services / Ministre de la Sécurité communautaire et des Services correctionnels Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire du gouvernement
Natyshak, Taras (NDP)	Essex	
Nicholls, Rick (PC)	Chatham-Kent–Essex	Second Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Deuxième vice-président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Orazietti, Hon. / L'hon. David (LIB)	Sault Ste. Marie	Minister of Government and Consumer Services / Ministre des Services gouvernementaux et des Services aux consommateurs
Pettapiece, Randy (PC)	Perth–Wellington	
Potts, Arthur (LIB)	Beaches–East York	
Qaadri, Shafiq (LIB)	Etobicoke North / Etobicoke-Nord	
Rinaldi, Lou (LIB)	Northumberland–Quinte West	
Sandals, Hon. / L'hon. Liz (LIB)	Guelph	Minister of Education / Ministre de l'Éducation
Sattler, Peggy (NDP)	London West / London-Ouest	
Scott, Laurie (PC)	Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock	
Sergio, Hon. / L'hon. Mario (LIB)	York West / York-Ouest	Minister Responsible for Seniors Affairs Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille Deputy Leader, Recognized Party / Chef adjoint du gouvernement
Singh, Jagmeet (NDP)	Bramalea–Gore–Malton	
Smith, Todd (PC)	Prince Edward–Hastings	
Sousa, Hon. / L'hon. Charles (LIB)	Mississauga South / Mississauga-Sud	Minister of Finance / Ministre des Finances
Tabuns, Peter (NDP)	Toronto–Danforth	
Takhar, Harinder S. (LIB)	Mississauga–Erindale	
Taylor, Monique (NDP)	Hamilton Mountain	
Thibeault, Glenn (LIB)	Sudbury	
Thompson, Lisa M. (PC)	Huron–Bruce	
Vanthof, John (NDP)	Timiskaming–Cochrane	
Vernile, Daiene (LIB)	Kitchener Centre / Kitchener-Centre	
Walker, Bill (PC)	Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound	
Wilson, Jim (PC)	Simcoe–Grey	Leader, Official Opposition / Chef de l'opposition officielle
Wong, Soo (LIB)	Scarborough–Agincourt	
Wynne, Hon. / L'hon. Kathleen O. (LIB)	Don Valley West / Don Valley-Ouest	Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs / Ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales Premier / Première ministre Leader, Liberal Party of Ontario / Chef du Parti libéral de l'Ontario
Yakabuski, John (PC)	Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke	
Yurek, Jeff (PC)	Elgin–Middlesex–London	
Zimmer, Hon. / L'hon. David (LIB)	Willowdale	Minister of Aboriginal Affairs / Ministre des Affaires autochtones

**STANDING AND SELECT COMMITTEES OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
COMITÉS PERMANENTS ET SPÉCIAUX DE L'ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE**

Standing Committee on Estimates / Comité permanent des budgets des dépenses

Chair / Président: Vacant
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Monique Taylor
Bas Balkissoon, Chris Ballard
Grant Crack, Cheri DiNovo
Han Dong, Michael Harris
Randy Hillier, Sophie Kiwala
Monique Taylor
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Katch Koch

**Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs /
Comité permanent des finances et des affaires économiques**

Chair / Présidente: Soo Wong
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Peter Z. Milczyn
Laura Albanese, Yvan Baker
Victor Fedeli, Catherine Fife
Ann Hoggarth, Monte McNaughton
Peter Z. Milczyn, Daiene Vernile
Soo Wong
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Katch Koch

Standing Committee on General Government / Comité permanent des affaires gouvernementales

Chair / Président: Grant Crack
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Joe Dickson
Mike Colle, Grant Crack
Joe Dickson, Lisa Gretzky
Ann Hoggarth, Sophie Kiwala
Eleanor McMahon, Lisa M. Thompson
Jeff Yurek
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Sylwia Przewdziecki

Standing Committee on Government Agencies / Comité permanent des organismes gouvernementaux

Chair / Président: John Fraser
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Cristina Martins
Vic Dhillon, John Fraser
Wayne Gates, Marie-France Lalonde
Harinder Malhi, Cristina Martins
Jim McDonnell, Randy Pettapiece
Lou Rinaldi
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Sylwia Przewdziecki

Standing Committee on Justice Policy / Comité permanent de la justice

Chair / Président: Shafiq Qadri
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Lorenzo Berardinetti
Lorenzo Berardinetti, Bob Delaney
Jack MacLaren, Michael Mantha
Cristina Martins, Indira Naidoo-Harris
Arthur Potts, Shafiq Qadri
Todd Smith
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Tamara Pomanski

Standing Committee on the Legislative Assembly / Comité permanent de l'Assemblée législative

Chair / Président: Toby Barrett
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Garfield Dunlop
Granville Anderson, Bas Balkissoon
Chris Ballard, Toby Barrett
Garfield Dunlop, Michael Mantha
Eleanor McMahon, Laurie Scott
Soo Wong
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Trevor Day

Standing Committee on Public Accounts / Comité permanent des comptes publics

Chair / Président: Ernie Hardeman
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Lisa MacLeod
Han Dong, John Fraser
Ernie Hardeman, Percy Hatfield
Lisa MacLeod, Harinder Malhi
Julia Munro, Arthur Potts
Lou Rinaldi
Committee Clerk / Greffier: William Short

Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills / Comité permanent des règlements et des projets de loi d'intérêt privé

Chair / Présidente: Indira Naidoo-Harris
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Kathryn McGarry
Robert Bailey, Lorenzo Berardinetti
Jennifer K. French, Monte Kwinter
Amrit Mangat, Kathryn McGarry
Indira Naidoo-Harris, Daiene Vernile
Bill Walker
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Valerie Quioc Lim

Standing Committee on Social Policy / Comité permanent de la politique sociale

Chair / Président: Peter Tabuns
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Jagmeet Singh
Granville Anderson, Vic Dhillon
Christine Elliott, Marie-France Lalonde
Amrit Mangat, Gila Martow
Kathryn McGarry, Jagmeet Singh
Peter Tabuns
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Valerie Quioc Lim

**Select Committee on Sexual Violence and Harassment /
Comité spécial de la violence et du harcèlement à caractère sexuel**

Chair / Présidente: Daiene Vernile
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Laurie Scott
Han Dong, Randy Hillier
Marie-France Lalonde, Harinder Malhi
Kathryn McGarry, Eleanor McMahon
Taras Natyshak, Peggy Sattler
Laurie Scott, Daiene Vernile
Committee Clerk / Greffier: William Short

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