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of Debates
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Monday 23 November 2015

Lundi 23 novembre 2015

Speaker
Honourable Dave Levac

Clerk
Deborah Deller

Président
L'honorable Dave Levac

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Monday 23 November 2015

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lundi 23 novembre 2015

The House met at 1030.

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

Prayers.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): As we do our introductions, today we have with us a former member from Thornhill, in the 39th and 40th Parliaments, Mr. Peter Shurman. Welcome.

Mr. Jack MacLaren: I'm pleased to announce that Andrew Roberts is here with us today. Andrew, would you stand, please. Andrew is joining my office as executive assistant as of today.

Hon. Helena Jaczek: Joining us today in the House are members of our legislative page Aaran Suthakar's family. We have Aaran's mother, Menaka; his father, Kandappu; his brother Gajan; and his grandfather Siva. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. Robert Bailey: It's a great pleasure today to introduce, in the west members' gallery, Mr. Tim Schindel, visiting us today, representing Leading Influence. I know he's going to meet with many members here today.

Mr. John Vanthof: I'd like to introduce Anthony Silva and Geneviève Fortier from the Neighbourhood Pharmacy Association of Canada.

Hon. Kevin Daniel Flynn: Speaker, as you know, today is youth homelessness day. Joining us from the Oakville United Way is Kathryn Fleischer. Please give her a warm Queen's Park welcome.

Mr. Todd Smith: I'd like to welcome all the members from the Ontario Real Estate Association who are joining us for question period this morning, in particular, a former staff member, Adam Yahn, who's been known to patrol the blue line for the Ontario Legiskaters.

Hon. David Oraziotti: It's a pleasure to also welcome to the Legislature today two individuals from the Sault Ste. Marie Real Estate Board, Andrea Gagne and Rob Trembinski.

As well, I want to recognize Matthew Thornton, government relations, from OREA, who's here today.

Mr. Michael Harris: I'd like to welcome and thank Ian Stedman, Chantelle Willson and Jennifer Hamilton, and their families, for joining me here this morning as I launch my rare disease private member's motion.

Ms. Sophie Kiwala: I am so proud to welcome today three people from the United Way of Kingston, Frontenac, Lennox and Addington. I have Bhavana Varma, president and CEO; Kim Hockey, the director of com-

munity initiatives; Derek Brown, the youth engagement coordinator; and Jenn Goodwin, the United Way KFLA board member and director of communications at Providence Care, and her son Alec.

We also have Cody Allan, youth council member on ending youth homelessness in Kingston, Frontenac, Lennox and Addington.

We have, as well, Matthias Leuprecht, who is a student volunteer in my office and he's the new youth engagement chair of our riding association. Welcome all.

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I'd like to introduce representatives from the Woodstock-Ingersoll and District Real Estate Board who are here with us: William Cattle, Nicole Bowman, Isaak Friesen and David Bellaire. We welcome them all to Queen's Park.

Mr. Chris Ballard: I'd like to welcome Michael Braithwaite, Dr. Sylvain Roy, Adrian Bain, Amal Hanna and Erin Boudreau, who are all here for Youth Homelessness Awareness Day. Welcome to Queen's Park, all.

Mr. Jeff Yurek: I'd like to introduce Justin Bates, Evan Martinelli and Joseph Hanna, who are here representing neighbourhood pharmacies. They're having a reception tonight in the dining room. I hope everyone can make it out.

Mr. John Fraser: It's my pleasure to welcome this morning representatives from the Neighbourhood Pharmacy Association of Canada who are here for their Queen's Park day: Denise Carpenter, Karen Wolfe, Elaine Akers, Kevin Comeau and Lawrence Varga. They're having a reception tonight so please stop by.

Mr. Monte McNaughton: I'd like to introduce to the House today a community activist from Newmarket-Aurora, Darryl Wolk. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mrs. Amrit Mangat: I would like to introduce page captain Ajay Narayan's mother, Surita Narayan; father, Camaron Narayan; grandparents Dai Narayan, Dharma Narayan, Malini Tiwari and Henjay Tiwari; and their family friend, Ferdinand Fortune. They are in the public gallery. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Hon. Michael Coteau: Joining us in both the east and west galleries here today are students from Don Valley East and one of the best schools in all of Ontario, École élémentaire Jeanne-Lajoie.

Mr. Jim McDonell: I'd like to welcome, from the Cornwall and District Real Estate Board: Robert Juhasz and Dani Tedesco-Derouchie. They're not here yet, but they will be coming in. They're here to stop the new tax coming through.

Ms. Laurie Scott: I'd like to welcome today, from the Ontario Real Estate Association, Wendy Giroux; Mike Heffernan from the Peterborough real estate association;

and Debbie Vernon from Muskoka-Haliburton. Thank you and welcome to Queen's Park.

WEARING OF SCARVES

Ms. Sophie Kiwala: I believe that you will find that we have unanimous consent that all members be permitted to wear scarves as part of the United Way campaign to eliminate youth homelessness. I would also like to request that you come to the grand staircase to assemble for a picture after question period, and come to our reception in room 228.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I'll try to capture most of that.

The member from Kingston and the Islands is seeking unanimous consent to wear scarves in honour of a campaign from the United Way, with a request to meet for a photo after question period. Do we agree? Agreed.

STANDING COMMITTEE ON SOCIAL POLICY

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: I believe we have unanimous consent to put forward a motion without notice with respect to the Standing Committee on Social Policy.

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

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: Speaker, I move that notwithstanding the order of the House dated Tuesday, November 3, 2015, the Standing Committee on Social Policy shall be authorized to meet on Monday, November 23, 2015, following public hearings on Bill 115, An Act to enact the Representation Act, 2015, repeal the Representation Act, 2005 and amend the Election Act, the Election Finances Act and the Legislative Assembly Act; and on Tuesday, November 24, 2015, during its regularly scheduled meeting times, for clause-by-clause consideration of Bill 73, An Act to amend the Development Charges Act, 1997 and the Planning Act.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Mr. Naqvi moves that notwithstanding the order dated—

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: Dispense.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Dispense? Dispense. Do we agree? Carried.

Motion agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Seeing no further unanimous consents, it's now time for question period.

1040

ORAL QUESTIONS

EXECUTIVE COMPENSATION

Mr. Patrick Brown: My question is to the Acting Premier. The Premier continues to defend paying the Hydro One CEO \$4 million. She is now defending this gold-plated paycheque by comparing it to corporate

America. The Premier can't find a single hydro company anywhere in Canada that would pay a similar salary.

Mr. Speaker, will the Acting Premier give us one comparable in Canada to justify this outrageous salary?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I'm delighted that the Leader of the Opposition is here and asking questions, but I sure wish he would ask a question about the infrastructure that will be built with the revenue generated from broadening the ownership of Hydro One. The truth is, Speaker, that the party opposite has absolutely—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Order, please. I seek to hear both question and answer.

Finish, please.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: He isn't asking about building infrastructure. He isn't asking about building hospitals. He isn't asking about expanding natural gas across the province. He isn't asking about Connecting Links. Speaker, on this side—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke, come to order. If the shouting continues, I'll move right to warnings.

Carry on.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: On this side of the House, we have a plan to build the infrastructure that this province needs. On that side of the House, they're great at criticizing, but they have no plan to build the infrastructure that they are actually lobbying for every day.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Patrick Brown: Again to the Acting Premier: There is no new infrastructure money. Your plan is the same pre and post the hydro fire sale. Let me ask the question again: Can you give me one comparable—one comparable—anywhere in Canada? You won't find it in BC, as their top three executive salaries combine to make just half that of the Hydro One CEO. You can't look next door to Quebec, because their CEO makes one eighth of the Hydro One CEO's salary.

How did this government sign off on this paycheque? Give me one justification of how you think a \$4-million salary is appropriate. No more spin, no more distraction—it's not about infrastructure—justify the salary.

Interjections.

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

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Part of our plan is to make sure that Hydro One becomes a better company, a stronger company, a more efficient company, with stronger management, committed to improved customer service and improved performance. Taxpayers will continue to benefit from the changes we are making, as the 40% share we continue to hold will generate revenue to the public. We have struck the right balance. The compensation is in line with other energy companies, but this is about better customer service. I know that your caucus hears the same stories about how Hydro One should be and could be a much stronger company.

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

Mr. Patrick Brown: Again to the Acting Premier: You say it's comparable to other energy CEOs, but you won't mention a single example.

People in Ontario are living in energy poverty. Tonight, a senior citizen in rural Ontario will have to choose between having a healthy meal for dinner or turning on the heat to keep their house warm. At the same time that this government continues to turn its back on these seniors, the Premier has somehow found the money to pay their Hydro One CEO \$4 million.

How can this government look in the eyes of seniors in rural Ontario who can't pay their energy bills and justify the salary?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I think the member opposite knows, or certainly should know, that we have significant support for low-income Ontarians to help deal with their energy bills. The examples that the Leader of the Opposition continues to use are examples of people who will be the beneficiaries of the programs for families.

The Ontario Electricity Support Program is a new program. I hope he is urging his constituents to enrol in the Ontario Electricity Support Program. It will save them an additional \$360 a year off their bill, or \$430 when combined with the removal of the debt retirement charge. We are focused on the energy needs of low-income Ontarians, and I hope that the members opposite are informing their constituents about the relief that is available to them.

ALZHEIMER'S DISEASE

Mr. Patrick Brown: My question is to the Acting Premier. The government is well aware that there are over 200,000 senior citizens living with Alzheimer's disease in Ontario. The current strategy for Alzheimer's disease and related dementias on the government web page is just four bullet points with no real action or plan. For example, the second bullet point says "invest in long-term-care homes," and clearly that isn't happening. Actually, only six facilities in the province have units for seniors who need behavioural supports because of Alzheimer's disease. The wait-lists are getting longer and longer.

Can the government tell us when we will see a plan and action on Alzheimer's?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Associate Minister of Health.

Hon. Dipika Damerla: I just want to begin by saying that the province has already embarked on a province-wide strategy to look at dementia. An expert panel has already been called and it's making its way through and doing its consultations under the leadership of the parliamentary assistant, Indira Naidoo-Harris.

In the meantime, I'd like to remind the Leader of the Opposition—in fact, I'm happy to invite him to showcase the number of investments we have been making in long-term-care homes across this province. Very recently, I was in Waterloo for the opening of a brand new facility, which was also attended by members of his caucus. Be-

fore that I was in Windsor, again for the opening of a brand new long-term-care facility. We're talking about close to 500 beds in the last three months that I have witnessed opening.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Patrick Brown: Again to the Acting Premier—and I would invite the minister to actually speak to the families who don't have the care for a loved one.

In 1999, a PC government introduced Ontario's Alzheimer strategy. It was the first of its kind in Canada, and it was a strategy that wasn't renewed by the Liberal government in 2004. It was a strategy that was actually commended and highlighted in the 2010 Rising Tide report by the Alzheimer society.

According to last week's coroner's report, the majority of residents in long-term-care homes have dementia. If that doesn't spark action from this government, they must have no heart. The government has the responsibility to help these families. Will the government provide the House with a commitment that they'll have more than simply four bullet points for dealing with Alzheimer's—that they'll deliver to the House, they'll deliver to Ontario, a real strategy for dealing with Alzheimer's?

Hon. Dipika Damerla: I know that the Minister of Health would also have a lot he would like to add, but as I've already said, we have embarked on a province-wide strategy to look at dementia for the entire province, not just in long-term-care homes, but at the continuum of care, because we know that people who have dementia don't just live in long-term-care homes; they also live in the community. What we have done is come out with a proposal that broadly looks at dementia and Alzheimer's, not just in Ontario, not just in Canada, but across the world.

Because we have an aging population, yes, the incidence of Alzheimer's and dementia is increasing. We have recognized that and we have already put in place an expert panel that is crafting a province-wide strategy. Let's just wait for that.

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

Mr. Patrick Brown: Again to the minister: Enough expert panels, enough talk—you've had 12 years. The last report expired over a decade ago.

I was at the Alzheimer's gala last week and people were telling me their stories, their concerns about how their loved ones don't have care.

I can relate personally. I saw my maternal grandmother pass away from Alzheimer's disease. I lived with her; I saw it. It's painful. So I'm asking the government to be serious about this. Listen to the former MPP—your Liberal MPP—Donna Cansfield, who tried three times to convince the Legislature to act. All she said after the failed attempts to get this government to act was that you've got an ethical, moral case that tells you that you have to do something. You should do something.

So I ask the minister: Will you do something? No talking points—will you actually act and make Ontario a leader?

Interjections.

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

Deputy Minister.

Hon. Dipika Damerla: I know that the Minister of Health also has something to add, so I'm going to refer the question to him.

1050

Hon. Eric Hoskins: I know it's the job of the official opposition to paint a picture of inaction, but the truth is that we're providing that leadership, we're providing the funding to our important community partners—\$18 million last year to the Alzheimer society.

We're working nationally, as well. I was at the federal, provincial and territorial meeting just last fall, where we made a decision to develop a national strategy for Alzheimer's. I think the member opposite would agree that it's important that we have that continuity and consistency in leadership right across the country. With the hard work of my parliamentary assistant the member from Halton, we're updating our strategy for Alzheimer's and for dementias across the board in this province. We're consulting with stakeholders.

But we've invested more than \$1 billion since 2011 in our Aging at Home Strategy—over the last four years, Mr. Speaker—and \$59 million alone for behavioural supports in our—

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

New question.

PRIVATIZATION OF PUBLIC ASSETS

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is for the Acting Premier. The temperature is dropping, and there are families across Ontario who rely on electricity to heat their homes. For families who rely on baseboard heating to keep warm at this time of year, whether that's a house in Thunder Bay or an apartment here in Toronto, higher rates will have a devastating impact on their ability to make ends meet.

Since the Premier decided to sell off Hydro One, prices continue to go up. Will the Acting Premier, on behalf of this Liberal government, promise Ontarians that selling off Hydro One won't mean skyrocketing hydro bills for people who need to heat their homes this winter?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: The member opposite has raised the issue that we have been very concerned about too, and that is the issue of hydro prices. That's why we have taken action—I have to say, supported by neither of the opposition parties—to lower the burden on people, particularly those with the lowest incomes.

Let's look at what we have done. We have made the decision—and it's a decision that actually was celebrated by the former Prime Minister during the last election campaign as if he had done it himself—to close the coal-fired plants. There is a cost to that, but there is an enormous benefit. I think everyone here understands the benefit of improved health from closing those coal-fired plants, not to mention what it does for the province.

We are helping families by removing the debt retirement charge—a legacy tax from when Harris was in government—two years earlier than planned, saving the average family \$70 a month on their hydro bills. As I mentioned earlier, we are—

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

Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The prices, the rates are going up 20% already. They've gone up 25% between last winter and this winter, regardless of what your income is. It's hitting everyone. Everyone's bills are going up.

Ontario families are worried that the selling-off of Hydro One is going to mean the bills go even higher. The government has tabled legislation that could stop independent consumer groups from fighting for lower rates at the OEB. The government is giving another leg up to well-connected Liberal friends, but making life more expensive for families paying the bills.

Will this Acting Premier tell Ontarians just how much more it's going to cost people to heat their homes because of the sell-off of Hydro One?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Let me just continue with some of the programs that are in place now. The Ontario Electricity Support Program: I really do want to take this opportunity to encourage all MPPs to inform their constituents of this. It will save low-to-modest-income families an average of \$360 a year. The discount will be applied directly to their hydro bill.

In addition, we have the Ontario Energy and Property Tax Credit, saving individuals up to \$993 a year, and up to \$1,131 for seniors. The Low-Income Energy Assistance Program provides emergency financial support of up to \$600 for families and individuals having trouble paying their bills. The saveONenergy Home Assistance Program helps consumers manage energy costs by providing energy efficiency assessments. And of course the Northern Ontario Energy Credit helps low-to-middle-income families and individuals living in Ontario, saving individuals \$143 a year, \$221 for—

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

Final supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Many times this Liberal government has claimed that hydro rates are out of their hands, but they are enacting new legislation that could stop consumer groups from taking their cases to the Ontario Energy Board to fight for fairer rates. The new private sector owners of Hydro One can apply for hydro rate increases all they want, and there's no protection for consumers here in Ontario.

Will this Acting Premier tell Ontarians why this government is muzzling independent voices who are trying to stand up for the people of Ontario, who are trying to stand up for lower rates?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Minister of Finance.

Hon. Charles Sousa: Let's be very clear: Hydro One does not have the power to set rates. That continues to rest with the independent Ontario Energy Board—the open and transparent OEB; that's how they engage. Furthermore, the government has introduced legislation

to strengthen and enhance the OEB's powers even further to protect ratepayers, increase accountability and improve transparency.

Here are some examples. In 2012, Hydro One asked for a rate increase. They received a 3% reduction of their capital request. Then, in 2011, the OPG also applied for a rate increase. They were denied their request and lowered those rates.

Interjection.

Hon. Charles Sousa: Furthermore—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Excuse me—second time, the member for Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke. Finish, please.

Hon. Charles Sousa: The Supreme Court of Canada recently reaffirmed the right of the OEB to ensure consumers pay just and reasonable rates for electricity. We are in a competitive market.

PRIVATIZATION OF PUBLIC ASSETS

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The OEB might be getting stronger, but consumer advocates are getting weaker because of what this government is doing. That's what's happening with the legislation he referenced.

My next question is for the Acting Premier. Can the Acting Premier explain why the Liberal government won't rule out even more asset sales?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I do acknowledge that the leader of the third party has been asking about this. We have been very transparent about our determination to broaden the ownership of Hydro One so we can generate revenue to pay for important infrastructure investments, including in her home community of Hamilton.

We do have assets. We are optimizing the value of those assets. We have real estate that we don't need to own. We had GM shares that we have sold. We are broadening the ownership of Hydro One.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Speaker, I certainly didn't hear a clear and transparent answer to my first question. The Liberals are obviously not prepared to rule out selling off more of our public assets. That means that selling more money-making, revenue-generating assets is on the table.

Will the Acting Premier tell Ontarians exactly what they, the Liberals of Ontario, are getting ready to put on the auction block next?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: We have been very open and we have been transparent. This plan was in our 2014 budget, our fall economic statement, our 2015 budget and our platform. We have said that we're looking at the LCBO head office, we are looking at Hydro One, we are looking at OPG's head office building, as well as the Seaton lands and the Lakeview lands, and that we're not looking at the LCBO, we are not looking at OPG. We are not looking at any of those assets. We will not be selling Niagara Falls power station, we will not be selling Darlington or Pickering nuclear, amongst others.

What we will be investing in is the infrastructure that this province needs. We're determined to do that. We will make the tough decisions so that we can build the infrastructure the people of this province need.

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: In October 2014, the Premier of this province pretty much said the same thing about Hydro One, and look where we are now. Hydro One is being sold off. So excuse me if I have a little bit of a lack of trust in what this member just said.

The Liberal sell-off of Hydro One is a mess. The FAO says that the sale will only raise about \$1.4 billion for infrastructure, less than half of the \$4 billion that the government claims. The government has to count money that it can't spend. The FAO has shown that it will increase the debt. The province of Ontario will be losing half a billion dollars each and every year in revenue, and the government cannot deny that rates are actually going to go through the roof.

When will this Liberal government actually learn from their failures, stop any further sell-off of Hydro One and make a firm commitment not to sell any further revenue-generating assets?

1100

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Minister of Finance.

Hon. Charles Sousa: The member opposite just made reference to a situation that is not a fact. She claims we are only going to get \$1.4 billion in capital appreciation out of this corporation to reinvest. We've already netted \$3 billion of that—going to reinvest in our economy, into new assets, into new revenue and new opportunities, and that's with only 15% of broadening ownership.

We still own 85%, or, in this case, actually 84% of the company, which is now increasing in even greater value and dividends to the province. That's a good thing. It's a good thing because it's creating greater wealth, greater opportunities and greater prosperity for all Ontarians.

At the same time, it's independently monitored by the OEB to ensure that rates do not skyrocket. Those are the control measures that are put in place.

More importantly: Dollar for dollar, it's being re-invested into our economy, into new assets, for the benefit of the people of Ontario.

LAND TRANSFER TAX

Mr. Steve Clark: My question is for the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing. The minister claims that his plan to hit homebuyers with a \$10,000 land transfer tax is all about helping municipalities. But if he's paying attention, he knows that an increasing number of mayors are speaking out against this tax. They know what we know: that this will make Ontario the most uncompetitive tax jurisdiction in North America to buy a home. That's bad news for a housing sector that creates thousands of jobs and drives important investment in our communities.

Speaker, does the minister agree that a municipal land transfer tax will hurt the economy by slowing down home sales?

Interjections.

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

Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing.

Hon. Ted McMeekin: I want to begin my answer by reminding the member opposite that it was the previous PC government that burdened Ontario's 444 municipalities by downloading, without providing any additional resource, \$3.2 billion in costs—

Mr. Jim Wilson: What have you done in 12 years, Ted?

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Simcoe–Grey, please come to order.

Finish, please.

Hon. Ted McMeekin: Obviously, we've touched a sensitive nerve.

We're doing our best to reverse that. We're working hard at that.

I just want to say, through you, Mr. Speaker, that after every municipal election we review the Municipal Elections Act. It's no secret that one of the concerns our beleaguered municipalities have is around revenue and the choices as to how they will raise revenue.

We're having that discussion with them. We've made no decisions yet. It's the same answer I provided before. The member opposite—

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

Supplementary?

Mr. Steve Clark: Obviously, the minister's spokesperson didn't write his notes today. He told the Mississauga News that his boss's tax will result in fewer homes being sold.

The minister isn't listening to me when it comes to stopping the imposition of any new municipal land transfer taxes, but maybe he'll listen to the other Steve Clarke. Here's what Steve Clarke, mayor of Orillia, told the Barrie Advance about this tax: "It could potentially hurt economic development in that it would create a disincentive for somebody wanting to buy a house, land or business."

Speaker, Steve Clarke is right. Will the minister take Mayor Clarke's advice and support my motion on December 3 to close the door on this home ownership tax for good?

Interjections.

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

Minister.

Hon. Ted McMeekin: They've got more nerve than Dick Tracy over there, I think.

Let me be clear: Ontario is not going to impose any new tax, nor are we going to facilitate a municipal land transfer tax. We believe that municipalities are mature. They're democratically elected. They're looking for new revenue tools. We're having that discussion, and we'll make a decision based on that.

Shame on the member opposite, given the history of the PC Party, for ranting up the rhetoric on this—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Through the Chair, please.

Hon. Ted McMeekin: —when he knows, or ought to know, that, save the \$3.2-billion download, municipalities would be in much better shape today.

COLLECTIVE BARGAINING

Ms. Cindy Forster: My question is to the Acting Premier and President of the Treasury Board.

Last week, as part of yet another omnibus budget bill from this government, the so-called progressive Liberals continue to pay back well-connected insiders and friends by releasing corporate giant EllisDon from a long-standing obligation to hire unionized workers province-wide. Strangely, this government is reintroducing a Conservative bill that the Premier herself voted against just last year.

Speaker, can the Acting Premier tell us specifically who it consulted with on this schedule of this bill, and explain to workers in this province why the government has once again introduced the EllisDon bill?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Minister of Labour.

Hon. Kevin Daniel Flynn: Thank you to the member for this question, which I had anticipated. What we're doing with this legislation is we're providing the authority to the government to make changes to implement a settlement that was reached by the arbitrator in a process that has been ongoing. It has made its way through the OLRB; it has made its way through the courts. At one point in the past, it appeared we were heading down the road that one side may get everything it wanted and the other side would get nothing at all.

With what we're proposing to do with the legislation when it comes forward and with the regulation when it comes forward is ensure that both sides are treated fairly in this regard. We've had one of the best arbitrators in the country working on this file. He has met with all parties involved with this. He has brought me some recommendations that I will be bringing to the House at a later date that I think will result in a much fairer settlement than was anticipated before.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Cindy Forster: I'd say only that 1% is going to be making out okay in this deal. Let's not forget that two separate appeal courts have upheld this 60-year agreement, and now this government is legislating. The problem is, it favours one party. That party happens to be a major donor to the Liberal Party. Never mind the Labour Relations Board; never mind the two courts of appeal; never mind the court of public opinion. It begs the question: Who really is in charge in Ontario?

Will this progressive Premier explain why she's gifting legislation to a major corporate donor that would further erode the rights to collective bargaining in this province?

Hon. Kevin Daniel Flynn: Thank you once again to the honourable member for that question. At every possible opportunity, I personally, and the members of my staff at the Ministry of Labour, attempted to facilitate a settlement that all parties could agree to. The arbitrator sat down with the groups over a weekend and they were able to hash out a deal that was agreed to by the parties in the room. They took it out for ratification. One group was able to get it ratified and the other one was not. At the end of this, we called them back together again and asked them to sit down to see if they could work out a deal because I knew I was dealing with people that did want to achieve a settlement.

Despite best efforts, we were unable to reach a ratified deal within the room, but the arbitrator has reported back to me. He has asked me that, when I make a decision to bring in the regulation, I will be directed by the settlement that was reached within that room.

YOUTH EMPLOYMENT

Mrs. Laura Albanese: My question is to the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities. Many young people in my riding of York South–Weston speak about the challenges they face in preparing for the labour market. I often hear that they lack the necessary skills and training that they need to find and keep good jobs. This is especially the case for young people who face multiple barriers to employment resulting from some combination of challenging life circumstances.

Mr. Speaker, I understand that the minister recently announced the launch of a new youth jobs program: Youth Job Connection. Can the minister please inform the members of this House on how this new program will help our most vulnerable youth access the necessary training and employment services to find meaningful jobs?

Hon. Reza Moridi: I want to thank the member from York South–Weston for that question. Last month I was proud to announce the launch of Youth Job Connection, a new targeted program that will provide intensive support and training to youth who face the greatest challenges finding employment.

I am proud to say that our government is investing more than \$160 million over two years to help over 27,000 youth across the province of Ontario to access a number of employment and training services. This program will be delivered at more than 130 Employment Ontario service locations across the province. It will have two components: a year-round component, which will help youth aged 15 to 29, and a summer component, which will provide high school students with summer job opportunities as well as part-time work during the school year.

Mr. Speaker, our government will continue investing in evidence-based programs to help connect our young people to the job opportunities they need to succeed.

1110

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mrs. Laura Albanese: Thank you to the minister for that answer.

All Ontarians, regardless of their background or circumstances, should have access to effective employment and training programs that give them the skills they need to succeed.

It is reassuring that a program like Youth Job Connection will provide much-needed intensive support to help young people access the labour market. I understand that this program is part of our government's \$250-million reinvestment in Ontario's renewed youth jobs strategy, which will help support a comprehensive suite of new youth employment programs.

Many constituents in my riding of York South–Weston would like to know more about some of the other innovative employment and training programs that will be made available to young people. Can the minister inform the members of this House of the different programs that will be included in this new suite of youth job programs?

Hon. Reza Moridi: Again, I want to thank the member for that question.

Mr. Speaker, the member is absolutely correct. Youth Job Connection is part of a comprehensive suite of new programs that will more effectively serve young people across a broader spectrum of needs and in more locations across the province of Ontario.

Youth Job Link, which will be launched next spring, is a program that will help youth who face fewer barriers for employment. I am pleased to say that every single service provider across the province of Ontario which belongs to the Employment Ontario network will be invited to deliver Youth Job Link.

We are also making an additional \$25-million investment in Employment Service to help employers provide more on-the-job training and trial job placements for our youth.

Mr. Speaker, young people and their employers across the province of Ontario will be better served than ever with more than 30 government of Ontario programs now in place to help youth build skills and find jobs.

HYDRO RATES

Mr. John Yakabuski: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Deputy Premier. Ontarians are now being bombarded with a new ad campaign promoting the Liberals' latest energy price shell game. When one shell game ends, a new one begins. The Ontario Electricity Support Program is just the most recent version of diversion and confusion when it comes to energy pricing. It is nothing more than rearranging the deck chairs on the Titanic. It pits one energy-poor family against another energy-poor family, and the Liberals draw the battle line.

The minister and the Deputy Premier must realize that every Ontario family needs real hydro relief—not another Liberal shell game—that can only come from a shift in policy direction from the wrong direction that this government is on.

Will the Deputy Premier stand in her place and announce a real policy change that will bring real relief to Ontario families?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Speaker, I'm a bit surprised that the member opposite isn't actually standing up and saying, "I'm really happy to see the debt retirement charge go," because this will be off the hydro bills two years earlier than planned, saving families \$70 a year.

In addition, we are focusing on the same people that you have brought up in question period, that your party has brought up in question period: those who really are burdened by high electricity bills. We know that the lower the income, the higher the burden of that bill.

As I said earlier, I really genuinely hope, politics aside, that everyone in this Legislature takes the time to make sure their constituents know about the new Ontario Electricity Support Program. It is a significant reduction in hydro bills. It is focused on people who have the lowest and moderate incomes. It is important that all members—

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

Mr. John Yakabuski: Speaker, they love to talk about a cornucopia of programs, none of which would need to exist if they had a proper energy policy.

This is just another classic play from the Liberal governing handbook: Announce a redistribution program so that the minister and the Premier can have some nice photo ops, but when you examine the details, it is nothing more than another shell game.

Because of the sliding scale of the OESP, many families who need relief simply will not get it. But more important is the point that the \$30 stipend from the OESP is nothing compared to the hundreds and hundreds of dollars this government has added to those same people's hydro bills over the years, and the hundreds more that you're going to add, each and every year, over the next decade.

Will the Premier just simply admit that the Ontario Electricity Support Program is more about photo ops and expensive ad campaigns than actually helping low-income electricity consumers?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Well, maybe the member opposite can sniff at \$500-a-year relief for Ontario families, but that's a meaningful difference for Ontarians.

I found it very intriguing, during the last federal election campaign, when the Prime Minister and the Minister of the Environment touted Canada's progress on reducing greenhouse gases by citing the changes we made in Ontario on shutting down those coal-fired plants.

We're proud of the decisions that we made to reduce greenhouse gases. We're proud of the decisions we made to improve the quality of our air. We're proud of the decisions we made to build a reliable energy system.

We all remember what it was like under their watch. It's not time to go back. We've made investments. We don't need more blackouts. We've got the kind of electricity system—

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

PRIVATIZATION OF PUBLIC ASSETS

Mr. Peter Tabuns: My question is to the Acting Premier. Municipal electricity utilities currently make payments to the Ontario government in lieu of municipal and school taxes. This money is supposed to help pay down the residual stranded debt left over from the old Ontario Hydro. Under current law, when the residual stranded debt is finally retired, these payments are supposed to go back to the municipalities.

But now the government has decided to lay a permanent claim to these payments. Bill 144 changes the law so that this money will never flow to municipalities, even after the residual stranded debt is paid.

Why is the government keeping the money that is supposed to be going back to municipalities and schools?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Minister of Finance.

Hon. Charles Sousa: The payment in lieu of taxes—that is being released, as would any other company, be it municipally and/or Hydro One. A majority of the LDCs are actually owned municipally, and those payments in lieu of taxes continue. Notwithstanding the amount that is being received, the proportionate amount goes to the residual stranded debt and/or stranded debt. Now we also have that billion dollars more going directly to OEFC debt.

Ultimately, we are sourcing greater valuation from this corporation, enabling us to reinvest in infrastructure and into other programs, to provide even greater returns for the people of Ontario and, at the same time, paying down debt.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Back to the Acting Premier: The residual stranded debt should be nearly paid off by now. But by selling Hydro One, the government is making this debt bigger and forcing businesses to keep paying \$600 million a year in debt retirement charges.

Now the government wants to permanently keep money that, under current law, is supposed to flow to municipalities and schools after the residual stranded debt is paid off.

How many more cash grabs will the government sneak into law to replace the money it's giving up by selling off Hydro One?

Hon. Charles Sousa: The member opposite likes to cite the FAO, but now he doesn't want to cite the FAO, who says that as a result of this transaction, we're able to source additional funding to pay down debt, and it's undetermined and uncertain what the residual stranded debt will be going forward, because it is an uncertain process.

We are providing certainty. We're removing the debt retirement charge from residences by the end of this year. Furthermore, we're reducing it for all businesses and commercial by the end of April 1, 2018. That provides

certainty nine months ahead of schedule, regardless of the degree of stranded debt that will still remain.

We know that that's important for residences; we know that's important for businesses. We know it's even more important for us to reinvest those funds into new infrastructure and new assets. That's exactly what we're doing.

HOME WARRANTY PROGRAM

Mr. Han Dong: My question is to the Minister of Government and Consumer Services. I understand that the Ministry of Government and Consumer Services is responsible for providing oversight to Tarion, an administrative authority that manages the Ontario New Home Warranties Plan Act. As part of this oversight, the ministry recently announced a review of the act, with the objective of improving consumer protection for new homeowners.

I'm excited to see this review progressing, because home warranty coverage is a particularly important priority in my riding. Trinity–Spadina is a rapidly developing area, with new homes built regularly. Modernized legislation could potentially improve the coverage Ontarians receive.

1120

The Ontario New Home Warranties Plan Act review is particularly timely, as it builds on a series of important steps this government has taken to improve warranty protection for new homeowners. Can the minister please speak to the—

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

Minister of Government and Consumer Services.

Hon. David Oraziotti: I want to thank the member from Trinity–Spadina for the question and for being a champion on this issue.

We will continue to work with Tarion to make improvements to the program, but let's talk about the improvements we've made to date under our government. We've developed and expanded a builders' registry that provides consumers with more information. We've doubled the warranty program from \$150,000 to \$300,000 for consumers. We've launched a new builder education program to ensure builders in Ontario meet the high standards we set, and we've removed an industry majority on Tarion's board of directors. There is now a balance on that board.

I am pleased with these steps, but I understand that further improvements can be made. The Ontario New Home Warranties Plan Act is nearly 40 years old and my ministry has committed to an independent review to assess how the legislation can be strengthened.

I'm pleased that former Associate Chief Justice Douglas Cunningham has committed to undertaking the review, and I look forward to commenting more in the supplementary.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Han Dong: I want to thank the minister for his work on this very important issue. I have spoken to the minister on a few occasions after my constituents raised concerns about their new home warranty.

Many of my constituents were pleased with the announcement of the review led by Justice Cunningham. The purchase of a home is the largest investment most homeowners will make in their lifetime. The review will help to ensure the investment is protected. I see great potential in this review, particularly in its commitment to include multijurisdictional comparisons and detailed consultations with new homeowners and the public, consumer advocacy groups, municipal stakeholders and many other impacted parties.

I understand that this important work will take place over an eight-month timeline. I know the minister will have to wait until the completion of the review before making any commitments on his next steps. In the meantime, can the minister speak to what he expects this review to focus on, and how recommendations will help our government work with Tarion to strengthen the protection program?

Hon. David Oraziotti: Thank you again to the member from Trinity–Spadina. As I mentioned, we've appointed Justice Cunningham to lead the review openly and transparently, with broad consultation and engagement from all stakeholders that are concerned about this issue.

I've specifically asked that the review focus on several key areas, such as how we can strengthen consumer protection in a number of ways, including warranty coverage levels and duration, as well as the dispute resolution process and the degree of government involvement in the policy changes of Tarion.

As well, Speaker, the review will focus on accountability and oversight of Tarion; any information disclosure requirements that would bring Tarion more in line with some of our other Open Government commitments are an objective that we're looking for.

While Tarion no longer has an industry majority on its board, we're also going to review board governance, and we'll also be reviewing the regulation-making authority of the board.

I look forward to seeing Justice Cunningham's report and acting on those recommendations.

HEALTH CARE FUNDING

Mr. Michael Harris: My question is to the Minister of Health. As the minister knows, for too many years now, we've seen too many patients forced to travel to Queen's Park to plead with government for life-saving and life-transforming medication and treatment for rare diseases. In the last year alone—and today—I brought in families whose heart-wrenching stories cry out for the government's attention, many going into debt to pay for the life-saving treatment that government is failing to provide.

Speaker, I've launched a website, treatrareisease.ca, where people can share stories and speak to the need for the health care support we all deserve.

This morning, I announced my private member's motion calling on government to strike an all-party select committee to develop recommendations for the funding of rare disease treatment. Will the minister commit today to support my motion for meaningful long-term solutions for rare disease sufferers here in the province of Ontario?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: Mr. Speaker, I applaud the member opposite for his advocacy on behalf of individuals living in this province with rare diseases. It can be as much as 6% of our population. I think it's actually as high as 8% of the population who suffer from rare diseases.

I also want to acknowledge the courage of those who were invited by the member opposite, who came here today to tell their very difficult stories about how they've struggled with these rare diseases, including the challenge in our health care system of proper diagnosis.

Mr. Speaker, it's important that the public know that Ontario is in fact co-chairing and leading a process nationally across the country. We've established a committee nationally, specifically to develop a strategy for rare diseases in this country. Ontario is leading that effort. We're co-chairing the process. We expect, as a result of that process, to be able to have improvements in this province so we can provide the care these people so rightly deserve.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Michael Harris: This all-party committee would hear from experts, physicians, drug manufacturers and, most importantly, rare disease patients in a meaningful dialogue instead of the press conferences they are forced to hold to get your attention. Minister, I'm sure you agree that patients deserve more than words of understanding from government and a pat on the back when they are at your doorstep and the cameras are on.

This all-party committee will review recommendations the government has already received and hear from experts to make sure patients suffering from rare diseases are treated fairly in the system. It's my hope that an all-party select committee will unlock that process, which has long remained out of reach. Will the minister join me and support my call to strike the select committee into funding and treatment for rare disease in Ontario? Yes or no?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: I certainly look forward to the debate on your private member's bill.

It's also important that long before the member opposite had his press conference several weeks ago with patients who were suffering from Ehlers-Danlos syndrome, long before that, months before that, we struck a committee in government specifically on EDS, an expert panel where we brought together all the experts across the province. When he brought those patients to Queen's Park, I made a commitment to them that day that I would invite them to participate in that panel and speak to that panel so that the panel would understand their specific circumstances and the challenges they face.

I'm happy to report that two weeks ago, I joined those families and those patients in front of the expert panel on EDS so that panel could hear directly from those individuals.

It's important that we focus on the patients—and we need all the partners. We need our drug companies—drug companies like Alexion, which has perhaps the highest-priced drug in the world and which chooses to sue our federal government instead of working proactively with us so we can deliver those medicines to those who dearly need them.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is for the Acting Premier. On Friday, we learned that 84 jobs will be cut at hospitals in Belleville, Trenton and Prince Edward county as the Liberals chop \$11.5 million from those hospitals. It means fewer nurses and health care workers to care for patients in operating rooms, the ER, infection control, the women's and children's unit and rehab—the list goes on.

When local residents fall sick, they will feel the impact of these Liberal cuts because every one of those workers does an important job: They save lives.

When will this Liberal government finally decide that patients are the priority and put a full stop, a full moratorium on any more cuts to registered nurses and front-line health care workers in Ontario's hospitals?

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

Hon. Eric Hoskins: I know the leader of the third party is referring to a process that was undertaken by the hospital corporation, the Quinte Health Care Corp., that involves four different hospitals. It's an effort for them to move forward in a sustainable fashion with regard to their funding allocation. It's true that there are some job losses that will result. That's always a difficult thing, something we try to avoid at every step.

There will be some shifts, as well, where it's deemed that that particular job description can be adequately or sometimes even better fulfilled by another type of individual, and that results in a shift of the job. But there are also 78 new positions that will be created as a result of these changes.

I'm working very closely with the Quinte Health Care Corp., working very closely with the LHIN, working very closely as well with members of our own caucus to make sure we do this properly.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Patients know how important nurses and health care workers are. I wish the Premier and the Minister of Health felt the same way, but under the Liberals, more than 625 registered nursing positions have been cut from Ontario hospitals this year alone, and more cuts are happening every week. Let's think of that another way, Speaker. It means that at least two registered nurses have lost their job in Ontario hospitals every single day since January 1 under this Premier's orders.

Why won't the Liberal government take responsibility for the deep cuts to patient care and order a full stop right here and now to any further cuts to nurses and front-line hospital workers?

1130

Hon. Eric Hoskins: I know that the leader of the third party focuses on the job losses. She doesn't talk about net jobs in terms of the many hundreds of new jobs that are created, including for our nurses across this province.

Mr. Speaker, I want to acknowledge the hard work of the member from Northumberland–Quinte West when it comes to Quinte because, particularly with the Trenton hospital but across that whole region, he has been working very, very hard to make sure that the services that those individuals and those communities deserve are retained.

In fact, through that process, we've been working where we created a community consultation process. More than 15 members of the local community that that member represents were consulted in terms of their health care needs and what they want to see in their health care corporation and the local community.

We're also going to be undertaking—and this was at the initiative of the member from Northumberland—a feasibility study to see how we can actually strengthen, in the case of the Trenton hospital, its efforts towards a health community hub.

ABORIGINAL EDUCATION

Mr. Yvan Baker: My question is for the Minister of Education. One of the most important aspects of what we do in government, I think, and one of the issues that I hear about the most in my riding of Etobicoke Centre is education, about providing our young people with access to excellent education. I know that our Minister of Education works very diligently and hard on that every single day.

When the government of Ontario and the Anishinabek Nation signed the first memorandum of understanding in 2009, it was clear that they made a commitment to ongoing collaboration that would support the establishment of the Anishinabek education system.

Since the signing of the memorandum of understanding with the Anishinabek Nation, I understand, Minister, that you have met on a regular basis, to identify and discuss common educational issues.

To further this process, in January 2014 the Anishinabek and Ontario agreed to enter into discussions on a master education framework agreement. Minister, can you please tell this House what the purpose is of entering into discussions on a master education framework agreement?

Hon. Liz Sandals: Thank you to the member for the question on a very important issue for all of us.

I want to begin by recognizing the long history of First Nations people in Ontario and, in particular, the history of the Anishinabek peoples.

The development of a master education framework agreement serves as an outline—almost an index—to the objectives, scope, principles and processes for the negotiation of a proposed master education agreement. It gives us an opportunity to collaborate on and formalize those partnerships. In fact, the master education agreement, when we get it completed, will formalize the relationship between the Anishinabek Nation and Ontario.

The agreement also confirms that we will work collaboratively with the Anishinabek people so that there's better co-operation between their schools and Ontario schools, which are actually where most of the Anishinabek students attend.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Yvan Baker: Thank you, Minister. Last Thursday, I understand that you visited with the Anishinabek First Nations in Sault Ste. Marie and successfully signed the master education framework agreement, which, I think it is fair to say, is an historic event. To my mind, it is evidence of your commitment and the ongoing commitment of our government and the Anishinabek First Nations to negotiate the terms of a new agreement in order to support First Nations students' education across the province.

I am pleased to know that First Nations students will have better access to education in Ontario and will work toward closing the gap in Ontario. Minister, can you please tell this House what the successful master education framework agreement will mean going forward?

Hon. Liz Sandals: It was indeed a very moving and exciting occasion. There were chiefs from all over Ontario there to sign the master education framework agreement. Everybody who was there agreed that this was truly an historic occasion which gives us an opportunity to collaborate. As I said, if we are going to ensure that our Anishinabek students succeed, we must collaborate.

Some of the students are in First Nations schools; the majority are in Ontario schools. What the master education agreement will lead to, when it's fully completed, is the ability to support students who are transitioning from one to another. It will enable us to share professional development. It will enable us to further expand on the agreements that we have between school boards and the relationship between school boards and First Nations.

CORRECTIONAL FACILITY EMPLOYEES

Mr. Rick Nicholls: My question is to the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services. Bargaining talks between the province and correctional officers and staff continued over the weekend without results. There is a cost that comes from failing to reach an agreement.

During one weekend this month, correctional officers didn't sign up for voluntary overtime. As a result, the province is said to have paid its managers to be on call all weekend, at a cost of about \$600,000. In May, we learned that the province had spent millions of dollars to prepare for strikes, months before negotiations ever began.

Speaker, how much money has the province spent to date due to the government's failure to secure a deal with corrections staff over a year of negotiations?

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: I thank the member opposite for the question. I'm a bit puzzled by the question because I take it he wants to intervene in a collective bargaining process that is taking place right now. I'm sure he will be the first one to counsel me not to engage in collective bargaining on the floor of the Legislature. We should respect the process that is ongoing. Both sides are working hard. We are very proud that we were able to reach an agreement which was ratified with OPSEU at the unified and at the central table. The corrections table continues to work hard.

In the meantime, we take the health and safety of our inmates and our staff very seriously, and we'll continue to make sure that all our correctional facilities are safe at all times and that services are provided to the inmates through appropriate staff.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Rick Nicholls: Again, I would encourage the government to continue to bargain in good faith—something that we don't believe is happening.

Unfortunately, years of Liberal mismanagement have led to a crisis in corrections. This has significantly impacted the relationship between correctional staff and the province. Staff have made numerous complaints about dangerous conditions in facilities, and have raised the alarm that our correctional facilities are understaffed. In return, correctional officers have been ignored. Even worse, some of them have been instructed by the government to stay quiet. Ontario's correctional officers and staff feel disrespected by this government.

Minister, when will your ministry show Ontario's correctional, parole and probation officers the respect that they deserve?

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: I think the question is a serious question. It is an important question that is being asked, and I want to give a serious response to the member opposite and all members.

We take our responsibility in terms of our correctional staff very, very seriously. We want to make sure that they're properly trained and that they're properly staffed because our correctional workers are on the front line when it comes to providing appropriate services around rehabilitation and reintegration for the offenders who are in our care and custody. That is why we have been working very hard since 2013, in an accelerated fashion, rehiring correctional, probation and parole officers. In fact, we have hired almost 500 new correctional officers in our institutions. We continue to engage in robust hiring as well. In fact there are about 100 correctional officers being trained at the corrections college as we speak.

GO TRANSIT

Ms. Catherine Fife: My question is for the Minister of Transportation. Last week, a member of the Liberal

caucus, the MPP for Kitchener Centre, publicly admitted that the Liberals' current plan for Kitchener-Waterloo GO trains is inadequate. She knows, just like the people of Kitchener-Waterloo do, that your government promised two-way, all-day GO trains to Kitchener in five years just 18 months ago. In April this year, Premier Wynne backtracked. We won't see the first GO train from Toronto to Kitchener arrive in the morning until 2025 at the earliest. Speaker, that's just not good enough. The people of Kitchener-Waterloo know what's at stake. Last year, your predecessor, Minister Murray, said that there would be GO train service that runs every 15 minutes between Waterloo region and Toronto within five years. That's what the former Minister of Transportation said to the people of Kitchener-Waterloo.

My question though is to today's minister. It's a simple one: When can the people of Kitchener-Waterloo expect more than one-way GO trains between Kitchener and Toronto: five years, 10 years or longer?

Hon. Steven Del Duca: Mr. Speaker, my only regret is that I won't have a chance to have a second friendly question like I just received from the member from Kitchener-Waterloo.

I want to begin answering by paying tribute to the member from Kitchener Centre in the government caucus and to the member from Cambridge because of their advocacy—not just their advocacy, but their real understanding of what's required when you need to make the tough decisions to fund important, crucial infrastructure.

Perhaps that's the kind of question that that member can ask her leader, who just days ago brought forward a motion and, in debate on that motion, neglected to tell anybody in her own caucus exactly how she, the leader of the NDP, would fund transportation infrastructure. More importantly, the leader of the NDP neglected to tell her own caucus members which one of their projects that they're so desirous of she would cancel if she had the chance.

On this side of the House, we understand the importance of spending \$31.5 billion over the next 10 years to move the province forward, to move Kitchener forward and to build Ontario up.

VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Chatham-Kent-Essex on a point of order.

Mr. Rick Nicholls: It's my pleasure to welcome to the Legislative Assembly today the Assyrian youth group, a group of college and university students from across the GTA. Welcome to Queen's Park.

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

Mr. Peter Z. Milczyn: It's my pleasure to welcome, from the town of Mimico in Etobicoke-Lakeshore, the grade 5 class from John English school, with their teacher, Mr. Stamatopoulos.

DEFERRED VOTES

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

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

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

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

The division bells rang from 1142 to 1147.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): On Tuesday, November 17, 2015, Mr. Murray moved third reading of Bill 9. All those in favour, please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Albanese, Laura	Harris, Michael	Naqvi, Yasir
Armstrong, Teresa J.	Hatfield, Percy	Natyshak, Taras
Arnott, Ted	Hoggarth, Ann	Nicholls, Rick
Bailey, Robert	Horwath, Andrea	Oraziotti, David
Baker, Yvan	Hoskins, Eric	Pettapiece, Randy
Balkissoon, Bas	Hunter, Mitzie	Potts, Arthur
Ballard, Chris	Jaczek, Helena	Qaadri, Shafiq
Berardinetti, Lorenzo	Jones, Sylvia	Rinaldi, Lou
Bradley, James J.	Kiwala, Sophie	Sandals, Liz
Chan, Michael	Kwinter, Monte	Sattler, Peggy
Clark, Steve	Leal, Jeff	Scott, Laurie
Colle, Mike	MacCharles, Tracy	Sergio, Mario
Coteau, Michael	Malhi, Harinder	Singh, Jagmeet
Crack, Grant	Mangat, Amrit	Smith, Todd
Damerla, Dipika	Martins, Cristina	Sousa, Charles
Del Duca, Steven	Martow, Gila	Tabuns, Peter
Delaney, Bob	Matthews, Deborah	Takhar, Harinder S.
Dhillon, Vic	McDonnell, Jim	Taylor, Monique
Dong, Han	McGarry, Kathryn	Thibeault, Glenn
Duguid, Brad	McMahon, Eleanor	Thompson, Lisa M.
Fedeli, Victor	McMeekin, Ted	Vanthof, John
Fife, Catherine	McNaughton, Monte	Vernile, Daiene
Flynn, Kevin Daniel	Meilleur, Madeleine	Walker, Bill
Forster, Cindy	Milczyn, Peter Z.	Wilson, Jim
Fraser, John	Miller, Norm	Wong, Soo
Gates, Wayne	Miller, Paul	Yakabuski, John
Gravelle, Michael	Moridi, Reza	Yurek, Jeff
Gretzky, Lisa	Munro, Julia	Zimmer, David
Hardeman, Ernie	Murray, Glen R.	

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

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 86; the nays are 0.

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

Be it resolved that the bill do now pass and be entitled as in the motion.

Third reading agreed to.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): It is not the process to interfere with a vote. I will not interfere with a vote, but if anyone ever uses unparliamentary language, I would offer them an opportunity to withdraw on their own.

Interjection.

Mr. John Yakabuski: I withdraw.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Member for Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke, thank you very much.

There are no further deferred votes. This House stands recessed until 1 p.m.

The House recessed from 1151 to 1300.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Mr. Todd Smith: Enough is enough. Mr. Speaker, last week the constituents in my riding got news that 162 positions were being cut from Quinte Health Care. That's 162 job cuts that are affecting Belleville General Hospital, Trenton Memorial Hospital and Prince Edward County Memorial Hospital, but most significantly, cuts that will affect the lives of thousands of patients and their families in the region. The 162 job losses at our hospitals include some of the most vital front-line workers, such as registered practical nurses, but extend to those who help the hospital run day to day, such as maintenance workers.

As the Ontario Nurses' Association vice-president Vicki McKenna stated, "reducing ... in emergency departments puts patients at risk," and "similar models have been tried elsewhere" with disastrous effects.

It's obvious that these cuts will have a negative impact on patients. Every day, hundreds rely on the high level of quality care that our hard-working nurses provide to the most vulnerable and those in need. Last year, Quinte Health Care received an approval rating of 99.9% for its quality of care, but with further staff cuts it's hard to imagine how care will ever improve at Trenton Memorial, Belleville General or Prince Edward County Memorial when this government is cutting jobs for people who deal with patients every day.

For the last couple of years, we've seen cut after cut forced onto local health care by this government. Eventually we're going to have to ask: How much more can our community give? How much more can our hospitals give? How much more of Prince Edward County Memorial or Trenton Memorial Hospital can go under the knife before there's no hospital left? The answer to that question is no more cuts.

WESTERN MUSLIM STUDENTS' ASSOCIATION

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Members' statements? The member for London South.

Ms. Peggy Sattler: This weekend, I had the pleasure of attending the first annual gala of the Western Univer-

sity Muslim Students' Association, or MSA, at the London Muslim Mosque. The event brought together more than 100 young Muslims from the Western MSA, the Fanshawe MSA, the Oakridge MSA from my riding of London West, which is London's largest secondary school MSA, and many other students and community members.

I rise today to applaud the efforts of these young people to raise awareness, promote cross-cultural understanding and challenge negative and dangerous stereotypes. Proceeds from the gala will be used to support the Western MSA Islam Awareness Week, an annual campus initiative held to encourage dialogue between Muslims and people of other faiths. Information booths, seminars and presentations by guest speakers are organized to highlight diversity within the Muslim community and dispel common misconceptions.

With world attention focused on the horrific and brutal violence in Paris, the efforts of the Western MSA take on special significance. In order to stand strong in the face of terrorism, we must stand together across race, ethnicity, language, religion and nationality to acknowledge the attacks in Paris and Beirut for what they are: a perversion of Islam, not a reflection.

We can all take a lesson from the enthusiastic and dedicated young people who participate in Muslim student associations on campuses and in schools across Ontario. Understanding is the best and most effective way to prevent fear. I am proud to congratulate the Western MSA and support them in their efforts.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I apologize to the member from London West. I said "London South." There is no London South; it's London West.

Further members' statements?

GALA DE RECONNAISSANCE À EMBRUN

RECOGNITION GALA IN EMBRUN

M. Grant Crack: Samedi soir, j'ai eu l'opportunité d'être présent au tout premier Gala de reconnaissance des gens de coeur.

On Saturday night, I had the privilege to attend the first recognition gala in Embrun, in the great riding of Glengarry–Prescott–Russell. It was a wonderful evening where we gathered to celebrate collectively the great work done by our community volunteers, celebrate our local entrepreneurs and also recognize community leaders.

I want to congratulate all those who were nominated, and specifically those who won awards: le prix APHO—la Loi sur l'accessibilité pour les personnes handicapées de l'Ontario—Patrice Dagenais; le leadership communautaire, la Banque Alimentaire Bons Voisins; la nouvelle entreprise de l'année, Boulangerie du village; service excellence, Euphoria Smoothies; and ambassador of the year, Jonathan Pitre.

Speaker, instead of choosing one winner, the review committee decided that all five nominees should win the

Volunteer Community Service Award. Congratulations to Christian Therkelsen, Connie Johnston, Greg Rokosh, Judy McFaul and Marie-Claire Ivanski. We were thrilled to have with us as a guest speaker Jonathan Pitre, who also won the perseverance award. Fifteen-year-old Jonathan suffers from a rare genetic condition, epidermolysis bullosa (EB), and he delivered an inspiring speech perfectly in both official languages.

I want to congratulate all of the winners, and also the mayor, Pierre Leroux, and the council of the township of Russell for organizing such a lovely evening.

KENT AGRICULTURAL HALL OF FAME

Mr. Monte McNaughton: Last week, three of my constituents earned well-deserved recognition for their accomplishments and service through their induction into the Kent Agricultural Hall of Fame.

Rex Crawford is a farmer who has served his community in a wide variety of capacities, including as a member of Parliament. In Dover, he farmed some of the finest and most productive land in the country. Rex has grown corn, soybeans, oats and wheat, sugar beets and tobacco. Rex is also a conservationist and has served on the boards of both the St. Clair Region Conservation Authority and the Lower Thames Valley Conservation Authority. I am proud to call Rex Crawford my friend, and I congratulate him on his induction.

Also inducted to the hall of fame were Bill and Diane Parks. Bill began as a soil and crop specialist for the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture. Meanwhile, he and his wife Diane had already begun the cultivation of blueberries. They moved their plantation to its present site near Bothwell in 1979. In 1990, Bill and Diane created the famous Parks Blueberries and Country Store. Today the Parks store employs 10 workers full-time and 25 part-time. Bill was named agriculturalist of the year by the Chatham-Kent Chamber of Commerce. Together, Bill and Diane were named agricultural innovators of the year, and they have received a lifetime leadership achievement award from the Ontario Farm Fresh Marketing Association.

On behalf of all the constituents in Lambton–Kent–Middlesex, I'd like to congratulate all the inductees in 2015.

INTERNATIONAL DAY OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: I rise today in celebration of the International Day of Persons with Disabilities, which will be held on December 3, 2015. The annual observance of the International Day of Disabled Persons was proclaimed in 1992 by the General Assembly of the United Nations. The observance of the day aims to promote an understanding of disability issues and mobilize support for the dignity, rights and well-being of persons with disabilities. It also seeks to increase awareness of gains to be derived from the integration of persons with disabilities in every aspect of political, social, economic and cultural life.

Here in Ontario, while persons with disabilities are active and engaged in society, there continue to be many challenges they must overcome. There is the pressing issue of affordable housing, with persons with developmental disabilities seeing long wait-lists, which hurts not only these individuals, but also families who are trying to support their loved ones.

Last week the member from Essex raised the lack of enforcement of the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, which for the past 10 years this government has ignored.

Finally, there is the issue of mental health. I am proud to have introduced my bill, which will address many issues in the mental health system and will alleviate much of the stigma that surrounds mental health issues in this province.

It is my hope that on the International Day of Persons with Disabilities, this government will finally give these individuals the respect they deserve.

OTTAWA REDBLACKS

LE ROUGE ET NOIR D'OTTAWA

Mr. John Fraser: Christmas came early for Ottawa this year. November 22, 2015, will be forever etched in the hearts of Redblacks fans. A spectacular 93-yard Henry-Burris-to-Greg-Ellingson touchdown in the final minutes of the game secured a victory and ended a 34-year Grey Cup drought for Ottawa.

The sold-out crowd was treated to a great back-and-forth game of football. I was proud to be there with both of my sons to watch the game. For years, Ottawa football—

Interjections.

Mr. John Fraser: I can hear the Hamilton fans over there; they're still grumbling.

For years, Ottawa football has brought our community and its people together. Félicitations; congratulations to coach Campbell, his staff, the players, and all those connected with the organization for making it to the Grey Cup in your second year. Thank you to the Ottawa Sports and Entertainment Group and all their partners who worked so hard to realize the dream of bringing a team to Ottawa.

1310

The Redblacks have been a great boost to Ottawa's community spirit. I know that all of Ottawa is behind our team and there will be a lot of Grey Cup parties this weekend. I look forward to watching the game at one of those parties. One more game. Go Redblacks! Allez les Rouge et Noir!

CHRISTMAS TREE DAY

Mr. Jim Wilson: I rise today to encourage members of this House to observe Ontario's first Christmas Tree Day, which will take place on Saturday, December 5. The Christmas Tree Day Act, a bill supported by all parties of this House, received royal assent in June,

making Christmas Tree Day in Ontario the first Saturday in December each year.

Aside from being part of our annual holiday tradition, Christmas trees make up an important part of our economy in Ontario. The \$12-million industry involves 647 tree farms producing over a million Christmas trees each year. This industry employs thousands of people in the agriculture, transportation and retail sectors.

While a key part of our agricultural sector, the crop plays an important role in the environment also. According to the Christmas Tree Farmers of Ontario, tree farms provide a stable refuge and feeding area for wildlife. Christmas trees also help remove carbon dioxide from the environment, and after the holidays, they can be used as mulch.

I'm asking all members to promote Christmas Tree Day to their constituents because of the important role these trees play in our lives. I would ask that members encourage people to buy a real tree to support our economy and the environment.

In closing, I'd like to thank Mr. Fred Somerville of Somerville Nurseries and Mrs. Shirley Brennan of the Christmas Tree Farmers of Ontario for the work they do and for the assistance they provided to me so that Christmas Tree Day could become a reality in Ontario.

FIAT CHRYSLER CASTING PLANT

Mr. Peter Z. Milczyn: I rise today in the House to share with members something of a tour of the Fiat Chrysler casting plant in Etobicoke-Lakeshore that I enjoyed a few weeks ago.

This facility was built in 1942 for the war effort. It was purchased by Chrysler in 1954 to make pistons and other engine components. During the 2008 financial downturn, the future of this plant was uncertain, but when Fiat bought it, they announced an investment of over \$27 million to bring in production that would sustain the facility. In 2012, they had just over 200 employees. Today they have over 530.

This is one of the plants in North America that has cutting-edge technology and it's actually employing people in highly skilled positions. That's where the growth and employment is. It's proof that innovation and success in Ontario are possible when we invest in our people.

I'm so proud of this facility. The employees there are multigenerational; some of their grandfathers worked there. For a car plant, unusually, many of the employees actually walk to work. Because they're part of the community, they contribute to community causes. They are an example that "made in Ontario" in the auto sector is world-class.

EVENTS IN ETOBICOKE NORTH

Mr. Shafiq Qaadri: I take this opportunity to rise and share some good news from the great riding of Etobicoke North. There are a number of developments.

First of all, of course, we're very proud to be part of a massive expansion that's going to be taking place at Etobicoke General Hospital. We're not supposed to be talking about the dollar value, but I estimate it's going to be at least \$200-million-plus. We're tripling to quadrupling the floor space, the actual imprint of the hospital. There are a number of new facilities that are coming online: a new cardiorespiratory diagnostic unit, massively expanded emergency room, birthing suites, renal dialysis, maternal newborn care and so on.

I look forward to being there for the opening. We've already attended many, many functions in terms of ribbon cutting and the architectural plans and the ground-breaking, etc., but we look forward to when it actually comes online to help my residents and constituents in Etobicoke North.

Along with that, I'd like to share with you an extraordinary development for Humber College. Again, as I recall, the share for the government of Ontario was something on the order of about \$90 million. It's a massive new and very elegant student centre. You'll be pleased to know, Speaker, that the Finch LRT is going to be basically stopping at that—it's the final end-point terminus, right in the great riding of Etobicoke North. There are actually eight stops that are coming to Etobicoke North.

Whether it's transportation, education or health care, Etobicoke North is on the move.

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

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC ACCOUNTS

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I beg leave to present a report on Cancer Screening Programs, section 4.01 of the 2014 Annual Report of the Auditor General of Ontario, from the Standing Committee on Public Accounts, and move the adoption of its recommendations.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Mr. Hardeman presents the committee's report and moves the adoption of its recommendations.

Does the member have a short statement?

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: As Chair of the Standing Committee on Public Accounts, I'm pleased to table today the committee's report, entitled Cancer Screening Programs (Section 4.01 of the 2014 Annual Report of the Auditor General of Ontario).

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the permanent membership of the Standing Committee on Public Accounts: Lisa MacLeod, Vice-Chair; Han Dong, John Fraser, Percy Hatfield, Harinder Malhi, Julia Munro, Arthur Potts and Lou Rinaldi.

The committee extends its appreciation to officials from the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care and Cancer Care Ontario for their attendance at the hearings.

The committee also acknowledges the assistance provided during the hearings and report-writing deliberations by the Office of the Auditor General, the Clerks of the Committee, and staff in legislative research.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I move adjournment of the debate.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Mr. Hardeman moves adjournment of the debate.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Debate adjourned.

COMITÉ PERMANENT DE LA JUSTICE STANDING COMMITTEE ON JUSTICE POLICY

M. Shafiq Qadri: Je demande la permission de déposer un rapport du Comité permanent de la justice et je propose son adoption.

Mr. Speaker, I beg leave to present a report from the Standing Committee on Justice Policy and move its adoption—sent to you via page Ross.

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

Bill 113, An Act respecting police record checks /
Projet de loi 113, Loi concernant les vérifications de dossiers de police.

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

Report adopted.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Pursuant to the order of the House dated October 27, 2015, the bill is ordered for third reading.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

DISCLOSURE OF INFORMATION RELATING TO THE PROTECTION OF CHILDREN ACT, 2015

LOI DE 2015 SUR LA DIVULGATION DE RENSEIGNEMENTS CONCERNANT LA PROTECTION DES ENFANTS

Miss Taylor moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 146, An Act to amend the Employment Standards Act, 2000 and the Public Service of Ontario Act, 2006 with respect to the disclosure of specified information relating to children and services in respect of children /
Projet de loi 146, Loi modifiant la Loi de 2000 sur les normes d'emploi et la Loi de 2006 sur la fonction publique de l'Ontario en ce qui a trait à la divulgation de renseignements précisés concernant les enfants et les services à leur intention.

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

First reading agreed to.

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

Miss Monique Taylor: The bill amends the Employment Standards Act, 2000, to provide protection for an employee against reprisal in situations where the employee takes steps in relation to reporting, under section 72 of the Child and Family Services Act, a suspicion that a child is in need of protection.

Part VI of the Public Service of Ontario Act establishes a scheme under which public servants may disclose wrongdoing. The bill amends the act to provide that specified persons who perform professional or official duties with respect to children are public servants for the purpose of that part of the act.

The bill also extends the protection against reprisals to circumstances where a public servant has disclosed information in relation to the Provincial Advocate for Children and Youth Act, 2007.

1320

PETITIONS

PRIVATIZATION OF PUBLIC ASSETS

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

“Whereas the current government under Premier Kathleen Wynne is calling for the sale of up to 60% of Hydro One shares into private ownership; and

“Whereas the decision to sell the public utility was made without any public input and the deal will continue to be done in complete secrecy; and

“Whereas the loss of majority ownership in Hydro One will force ratepayers to accept whatever changes the new owners decide, such as higher rates; and

“Whereas electricity rates are already sky-high and hurting family budgets as well as businesses; and

“Whereas ratepayers will never again have independent investigations of consumer complaints, such as the Ontario Ombudsman’s damning report on failed billing; and

“Whereas the people of Ontario are the true owners of Hydro One and they do not believe the fire sale of Hydro One is in their best interest;

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

“To protect Ontario ratepayers by stopping the sale of Hydro One.”

I support this petition, will affix my name and send it with page Noam.

HIGHWAY IMPROVEMENT

Mr. Taras Natyshak: This is a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario that reads:

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

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

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

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

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

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

I support this petition, will affix my name to it and send it to the Clerks’ table via page Ben.

TENANT PROTECTION

Mr. Jim Wilson: “Whereas our present land leases with Parkbridge Lifestyle Communities Inc. are covered by the Residential Tenancies Act, 2006 (RTA); however, they are exempted from the protection of rent controls under the act. Being part 1, section 6, subsection 2, and

“Whereas the landlord has the option to increase the monthly land rental by \$50 above the existing rent, to a new purchaser, when a home is sold.

“Whereas ‘Country Meadows’ is a community of permanent homes located on leased lands whose residents are retired and living on fixed incomes. Continued rental increases beyond the guidelines of the RTA, is unsustainable to retired residents on fixed incomes.

“Therefore, we the undersigned residents of ‘Country Meadows’, petition the Legislature to change the RTA to include rent controls for retirement type communities located on leased lands and, to delete the option given to landlords to increase land rental rates upon sale of a home in such communities. The foregoing would enable retirees to remain in their homes and enjoy their hard-earned retirement years.”

I agree with this petition and I will sign it.

PRIVATIZATION OF PUBLIC ASSETS

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: A petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Privatizing Hydro One: Another Wrong Choice.

“Whereas once you privatize hydro, there’s no return; and

“We’ll lose billions in reliable annual revenues for schools and hospitals; and

“We’ll lose our biggest economic asset and control over our energy future; and

“We’ll pay higher and higher hydro bills just like what’s happened elsewhere;

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

“To stop the sale of Hydro One and make sure Ontario families benefit from owning Hydro One now and for generations to come.”

I sign the petition and give it to page Hannah to deliver.

CURLING

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas Ontario’s curling clubs are experiencing significant spikes in hydro costs due in large part to the so-called ‘global adjustment’; and

“Whereas Ontario’s curling clubs have already been forced to raise rates and reduce services to their members; and

“Whereas if those costs continue to rise, it could affect their ability to provide curling services to current or future members; and

“Whereas there are over 200 curling facilities in Ontario used by approximately 50,000 curlers; and

“Whereas up to 100 curling clubs are already at risk of closing due to the high cost of hydro; and

“Whereas community building—multi-generations can play together or against each other, curlers come from a wide variety of backgrounds: professionals, business owners, tradespeople, teachers, students, retirees; and

“Whereas great exercise for all ages and ability, an affordable sport with many different levels of competition from little rocks, juniors, adults, seniors and even at the Olympics;

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

“To immediately develop new policies to address the inequities of the class allocation system for global adjustment charges that are impacting the existence of curling clubs and other non-profit associations across Ontario.”

I agree with this petition and send it down with page Michelle.

POET LAUREATE

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: “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.”

I sign my signature to this petition and give it to page Megan Faith to deliver.

PRIVATIZATION OF PUBLIC ASSETS

Mr. Robert Bailey: This petition is to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the provincial government is creating a privatization scheme that will lead to higher hydro rates, lower reliability, and hundreds of millions less for our schools, roads, and hospitals; and

“Whereas the privatization scheme will be particularly harmful to northern and First Nations communities; and

“Whereas the provincial government is creating this privatization scheme under a veil of secrecy that means Ontarians don’t have a say on a change that will affect their lives dramatically; and

“Whereas it is not too late to cancel the scheme;

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

“That the province of Ontario immediately cancel its scheme to privatize Ontario’s Hydro One.”

I agree with this petition, Mr. Speaker, and send it down with Aaran.

PRIVATISATION DES BIENS PUBLICS

M. Taras Natyshak: J’ai le plaisir de présenter une pétition à l’Assemblée législative de l’Ontario :

« Attendu que le gouvernement provincial conçoit un projet de privatisation qui entraînera une hausse des tarifs d’électricité, une baisse de la fiabilité et des centaines de millions de dollars en moins pour nos écoles, nos routes et nos hôpitaux; et

« Attendu que le projet de privatisation sera particulièrement préjudiciable pour les communautés du Nord et des Premières Nations; et

« Attendu que le gouvernement provincial conçoit ce projet de privatisation dans le secret, faisant que les Ontariens n’ont pas un mot à dire sur un changement qui affectera sérieusement leur vie; et

« Attendu qu’il n’est pas trop tard pour annuler le projet;

« Compte tenu de cela, nous, les soussignés, pétitionnons l’Assemblée législative de l’Ontario comme suit :

« Que la province de l’Ontario annule immédiatement son projet de privatisation du réseau de distribution d’électricité de l’Ontario. »

J'appuie cette pétition et affiche ma signature pour l'envoyer à la table.

PRIVATIZATION OF PUBLIC ASSETS

Mr. Jeff Yurek: I have a petition here:

"Whereas the provincial government is creating a privatization scheme that will lead to higher hydro rates, lower reliability, and hundreds of millions less for our schools, roads and hospitals; and

"Whereas the Liberal government has already wasted \$2 billion on the smart meter program and \$1.1 billion on the gas plant scandal; and

"Whereas the Financial Accountability Officer has confirmed the Liberal government's plan to sell off Hydro One will result in Ontario's fiscal situation deteriorating; and

"Whereas it is not too late to cancel the scheme;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to immediately cancel the fire sale of Hydro One."

On behalf of my constituents, I completely agree with this petition and affix my signature on it.

AUTOMOTIVE INDUSTRY

Mr. Taras Natyshak: I'm pleased to present this petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

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

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

1330

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

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

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

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

I fully agree with this petition, will affix my name to it and send it to the Clerks' table through page Megan.

ONTARIO RETIREMENT PENSION PLAN

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

"Whereas the Ontario government's proposed Ontario Retirement Pension Plan (ORPP) is a mandatory pension

plan which would target small businesses and their employees; and

"Whereas there has been little to no discussion on what the costs would be, or who would pay them; and

"Whereas affected businesses would be hit with up to \$1,643 per employee, per year in new payroll taxes starting in 2017; and

"Whereas affected employees would have up to \$1,643 per year extra deducted from their paycheques, and it would take 40 years for them to see the full pension benefits; and

"Whereas the Canadian Federation of Independent Business predicts the unemployment rate in Ontario would rise by 0.5%, and there would be a reduction in wages over the longer term; and

"Whereas all of these costs would be shouldered exclusively by small businesses and their employees; and

"Whereas public sector and big business employees who already have a pension plan will not be asked to pay into the plan;

"We, the undersigned, do not support implementation of the Ontario Retirement Pension Plan and petition the government of Ontario to axe the pension tax."

I'll support this, sign my name and send it with page Michelle.

HEALTH CARE FUNDING

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: "Petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Ontario's growing and aging population is putting an increasing strain on our publicly funded health care system; and

"Whereas since February 2015, the Ontario government has made an almost 7% unilateral cut to physician services expenditures which cover all the care doctors provide to patients; and

"Whereas the decisions Ontario makes today will impact patients' access to quality care in the years to come and these cuts will threaten access to the quality, patient-focused care Ontarians need and expect;

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

"The Minister of Health and Long-Term Care return to the table with Ontario's doctors and work together through mediation-arbitration to reach a fair deal that protects the quality, patient-focused care Ontario's families deserve."

I sign this petition and give it to page Ross to deliver.

HEALTH CARE FUNDING

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas Ontario's growing and aging population is putting an increasing strain on our publicly funded health care system; and

"Whereas since February 2015, the Ontario government has made an almost 7% unilateral cut to physician

services expenditures which cover all the care doctors provide to patients; and

“Whereas the decisions Ontario makes today will impact patients’ access to quality care in the years to come and these cuts will threaten access to the quality, patient-focused care Ontarians need and expect;

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

“The Minister of Health and Long-Term Care return to the table with Ontario’s doctors and work together through mediation-arbitration to reach a fair deal that protects the quality, patient-focused care Ontario’s families deserve.”

I agree with this petition. I will send it down with page Ben.

DIAGNOSTIC SERVICES

Mr. Taras Natyshak: I’m pleased to present this petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario. It reads:

“Whereas wait times are rising to 80+ days for an MRI in southwestern Ontario;

“Whereas experienced and qualified technologists are available to fill positions in this field, but lack of funding to hospitals only allows limited hours of operation;

“Whereas by allowing independent health facilities the licence to have MRI as an added modality, it would drastically cut wait times and create much-needed jobs;

“Whereas as a new open MRI would accommodate more patients with claustrophobia and larger size and keep tax dollars in our community;

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

“Decrease MRI wait times and create jobs by increasing the funding for MRI services and implement a plan to allow MRI as a modality in independent health facilities in southwestern Ontario.”

I agree with this petition, will affix my name to it and send it to the Clerks’ table via page Prasanna.

SAUBLE BEACH LAND CLAIM

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

“Whereas there are serious concerns with the government’s policy involving third parties named in land claim disputes in Ontario, namely the Sauble Beach land claim;

“Whereas the government of Ontario and the government of Canada have equally failed to include protection of the third parties named in this land claim dispute, specifically they have abandoned any responsibility in honouring crown patent grants and in the case of Ontario, honouring the land registry system;

“Whereas there is no indication that any effort is being made to protect the interest of the public or third parties named in the Sauble Beach land claim dispute;

“Whereas the current process concerning the dissemination of information to third parties named in this land claim dispute is deeply flawed;

“Whereas there is no consultation with the third parties as to crown land planning and decision-making nor any engagement in a process that must be open as per the MNRF’s publicly stated principles on land negotiations;

“Whereas third parties named in the land claim should be consulted and their concerns should be reflected in negotiations;

“We, the undersigned, petition the government of Ontario to do the following:

“To review its guiding principles for land claim negotiations and the respective roles of Canada and Ontario in settling claims in an effort to enhance protection of third parties and all citizens affected by land disputes, to provide open communication and accountability to all pertinent stakeholders, and to provide appropriate financial support to ensure this matter is dealt with in a fair and timely manner.”

I support this petition, will affix my name and send it with page Benjamin S.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): That concludes the time we have available for petitions this afternoon.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

BUDGET MEASURES ACT, 2015

LOI DE 2015 SUR

LES MESURES BUDGÉTAIRES

Mr. Sousa moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 144, An Act to implement Budget measures and to enact or amend certain other statutes / Projet de loi 144, Loi visant à mettre en oeuvre les mesures budgétaires et à édicter ou à modifier d’autres lois.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I recognize the Minister of Finance to lead off the debate.

Hon. Charles Sousa: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I will be sharing my time with my parliamentary assistant, the member from York South–Weston.

I am pleased to stand today in the House for the second reading of Bill 144, the Budget Measures Act, 2015, a bill that would help us implement our economic and fiscal plan, as laid out in our 2015 Ontario budget, a bill that helps build Ontario up, a bill that helps build Ontario businesses up. Helping Ontario businesses succeed and grow helps create rewarding and high-paying jobs.

We’ve already made great strides in supporting Ontario businesses, Mr. Speaker. Ontario’s business tax reductions have positioned our province as one of the most attractive locations in the industrialized nations for new business investment. Ontario is one of the top destinations for foreign direct investment in North America.

The government has done a lot to get to this point. We eliminated the capital tax, which corporations paid whether or not they had a profit. This provided \$2.1

billion of tax relief per year. We've cut corporate income tax rates for small and large businesses alike, providing another \$2.3 billion of tax relief each year. And we eliminated the employer health tax for thousands of small employers in Ontario.

All these measures promote a more competitive business climate and attract new business investment, helping to support the backbone of innovation in our economy. But the marketplace is ever-changing, Mr. Speaker, so we must continue to adapt and evolve the support we offer businesses. That's why this government is proposing Bill 144, the Budget Measures Act, a bill that, if passed, would enact five new statutes and amend other statutes. It would further the economic plan set forth in the 2015 budget and demonstrate the government's commitment to create a dynamic and innovative business climate, an environment that enables us to spur greater opportunities.

The bill contains a number of significant steps as we move forward with our plan. The government is proposing to remove, for example, the debt retirement charge cost, substantive amounts that will then be released by April 1, 2018, for all non-residential consumers. That's nine months earlier than previously estimated. It would also reduce businesses' electricity bills. Ending the DRC on a legislated, fixed date would provide certainty to commercial, industrial and other users, to help them plan their investments more effectively.

To further help businesses succeed and grow, the Budget Measures Act, 2015, also proposes to make amendments to the Liquor Control Act to operationalize the sale of beer in grocery stores. It simplifies rules in the Securities Act on the regulation of takeover bids and issuer bids, and it provides one-time relief to eligible Ontario interactive digital media companies.

1340

The bill will also move forward Ontario's infrastructure plan by proposing amendments to the Trillium Trust Act to designate the following as qualifying assets: the LCBO head office lands, Ontario Power Generation's head office building, the Lakeview lands, and the province's shares in Hydro One and Hydro One Brampton. Also under the proposed amendments, net revenue gains from the sale of these assets would be dedicated to the Trillium Trust.

Other proposed changes in the Budget Measures Act, 2015, include improving and streamlining the regulation and promotion of the horse racing industry in Ontario, amendments to the Tobacco Tax Act to strengthen oversight of raw leaf tobacco, and improving the management of corporate land forfeited to the province of Ontario.

To give further insight into the proposed new statutes and amendments, I call upon my colleague Laura Albanese to provide this House with further details on the Budget Measures Act, 2015.

Mrs. Laura Albanese: Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to have the opportunity to stand today in the Ontario Legislative Assembly to provide further details on the new statutes and amendments this government is proposing in the Budget Measures Act, 2015.

Bill 144 proposes a number of changes to help Ontario businesses. First, we're looking at the cost of running a business. As you know, this government is committed to reducing electricity cost pressures on small businesses and industrial consumers.

Previously, the government announced that it is removing the debt retirement charge from residential users' electricity bills on January 1, 2016, saving a typical residential user about \$70 per year. This new bill, the Budget Measures Act, 2015, proposes to remove the debt retirement charge for commercial, industrial and other non-residential electricity users nine months earlier than previously estimated, on April 1, 2018. This would provide more certainty to commercial, industrial and other users, and help them plan their investment decisions more effectively. This would save a large industrial company using 3,000 megawatts per month \$21,000 per month, and a small business using 20,000 kilowatts per month, \$140 a month.

Second, we are proposing a number of amendments for business tax credits. For instance, the government is proposing changes to the Ontario Interactive Digital Media Tax Credit. The 2015 Ontario budget announced a number of changes to this tax credit.

Since its introduction in the 1998 budget, interactive digital media products have become mainstream, and tax support has grown at an unsustainable rate. To better meet the needs of this growing industry, the 2015 budget proposed to focus the credit on entertainment products and educational products for children under the age of 12.

To enable regulatory amendments, the Budget Measures Act, 2015, proposes to remove a requirement that all, or substantially all, of a product must be developed in Ontario by a qualifying corporation.

On November 2, 2015, the Ministry of Finance released draft regulations for public comment that would replace the requirement, as well as make other amendments to the Interactive Digital Media Tax Credit that were announced in the budget.

Third, we are looking at the business of horse racing in this province. In the 2015 budget, our government committed to enabling the long-term success of Ontario's horse racing industry. We recognize that this industry is vital to rural communities across Ontario, and it is an important part of Ontario's rich heritage. It supports rural jobs and economic development in the agricultural sector, particularly as it relates to the horse breeding sector.

In June 2012, the government established a panel to determine how to best modernize the industry. After extensive consultation with stakeholders and the public, the panel's final report, released in October 2013, included a number of key recommendations. Based in part on these recommendations, the government created the Horse Racing Partnership Plan and raised the investment in this plan to \$500 million over five years. This plan will support a world-class horse racing industry in the province. This plan reflects the willingness of many in

the industry to build a new partnership with government and work together to ensure long-term success.

As part of the HRPP, the Horse Racing Partnership Plan, the government directed the Ontario Lottery and Gaming Corp., OLG, to integrate horse racing into its gaming strategy as permitted under existing statutory authorities. In the 2015 budget, the government committed to strategically realigning provincial horse racing regulations, adjudication and funding within the government and its agencies. That is why, Mr. Speaker, the Budget Measures Act, 2015, proposes to improve and streamline the regulation and promotion of the horse racing industry in Ontario.

Specifically, if passed, the amendments would authorize the Ontario Lottery and Gaming Corp. to support live horse racing in Ontario, excluding operation of a parimutuel system of betting. The amendments also authorize the Alcohol and Gaming Commission of Ontario to undertake the regulation of horse racing in the province, with the licensing adjudicative functions to transfer to MAG's Licence Appeal Tribunal.

OLG are experts in promoting gaming. By integrating horse racing into OLG, the industry will benefit from centralized marketing and expertise that would expose more Ontarians to this live sport.

New provisions would also authorize the Minister of Finance to establish a grant program for the purpose of supporting live horse racing in Ontario. A transitional provision would authorize the minister to designate such a program as the successor to the Horse Racing Partnership Funding Program. This is part of our framework to support the long-term success of the horse racing industry in Ontario.

Fourth, we are strengthening the securities sector through amended legislation.

As you know, Mr. Speaker, Toronto is the financial capital of Canada and a leading global financial centre, recently moving up to eighth place in Z/Yen Group's Global Financial Centres Index, and is now ranked second in North America, behind only New York. Toronto is home to many leading banks, securities dealers, insurers, pension funds and financial services firms. The financial services sector, overall, accounts for almost 10% of Ontario's GDP and employs around 380,000 people. Ontario's financial services sector remains the province's second-largest sector after manufacturing, based on output. In 2014, the sector created jobs almost twice as fast as the overall Ontario economy. According to the Conference Board of Canada, 43% of Canada's financial services headquarters employees are based in Toronto. That's triple the next largest, which is Montreal, at only 12.4%.

The securities sector and its regulation are very important to Ontario's economy. Over half of the Canadian securities industry GDP and employment, and 80% of market activity in Canada, by some measures, take place in Ontario. That is why Ontario is taking a leadership role in the establishment of the Cooperative Capital Markets Regulatory System, or CCMR.

Further to a 2015 budget announcement, proposed amendments to securities legislation would largely repeal part 20 of the Securities Act. These amendments are intended to more closely harmonize the provisions in the Securities Act with those of all other provinces and territories and with the proposed approach under the Cooperative Capital Markets Regulatory System.

If this change is enacted, the OSC would make proposed National Instrument 62-104, takeover bids and issuer bids, a rule in Ontario, and most substantive regulatory requirements would be included in the rule. That is consistent with the current approach in all other provinces and territories and the planned approach under the co-operative system. These changes would facilitate transition to the co-operative system, and participating in the system would make capital markets in Canada safer, more efficient and more competitive.

1350

The proposed amendments to section 142 of the Securities Act would further extend certain exemptions under Ontario Securities Commission rules regulating derivatives markets as they apply to the crown and the Ontario Financing Authority.

Of course, Mr. Speaker, there are other areas that we are focusing on to help grow the economy, and the Budget Measures Act, 2015, supports those areas as well.

We continue to make investments in what matters most to Ontarians: investments in infrastructures like roads, bridges and transit. We know that modern infrastructure is the basis of a well-functioning economy and a prosperous society. It supports Ontario's industries, creates jobs and provides long-term benefits to Ontarians and the economy. In fact, the Conference Board of Canada estimated that the province's infrastructure investments from 2006 to 2014 would add more than \$1,000 to the average annual income of Ontarians by 2014. The Conference Board also said that these investments would lower the unemployment rate by almost 1% relative to where it would otherwise have been.

The opposite side of the coin is this: If governments fail to invest in infrastructure, economic and productivity growth slows and quality of life suffers. That is why Ontario is investing more than \$130 billion over 10 years in public infrastructure projects. This represents the largest infrastructure investment in Ontario's history. Total investments are expected to support more than 110,000 jobs per year, on average, in construction and related industries, including 20,000 jobs from investments made as part of Moving Ontario Forward.

Excuse my voice, Mr. Speaker; I'm getting over a cold.

Our Moving Ontario Forward plan makes \$31.5 billion available over 10 years for public transit, transportation and other priority infrastructure projects across Ontario. About \$16 billion will be invested in transit projects in the greater Toronto and Hamilton area and about \$15 billion will be invested in transportation and other priority infrastructure projects across the province outside the GTHA.

To support these investments, we are unlocking the value of provincial assets to help fund these necessary infrastructure investments. As you know, the 2014 Ontario budget established the Trillium Trust, an account dedicated to fund infrastructure investments from asset sales to ensure transparency. As part of the Budget Measures Act, 2015, we are proposing amendments to the Trillium Trust Act to increase that transparency. The changes would confirm certain assets included in the government's asset optimization strategy as qualifying assets under the act, for which net revenue gains from a sale would be dedicated to the Trillium Trust. These assets include the province's shares in Hydro One and in Hydro One Brampton, as well as the LCBO head office lands, the OPG head office building and the Lakeview lands. The net revenue gains from these assets, in turn, would be used to fund infrastructure projects that will create jobs and strengthen the economy.

To conclude, the 2015 Ontario budget laid out our government's vision to make the necessary investments in modern public infrastructure, to create an innovative and dynamic business environment, to invest in people's skills and talents, and to build a strong and secure retirement income system. The Budget Measures Act, 2015, proposes changes to further this government's four-part economic plan to build up our province. The act supports Ontario's businesses, helping them to compete in an increasingly competitive global economic environment. It supports investments in key public infrastructure projects that will attract investment, support industry, create jobs and allow people and goods to move more freely throughout Ontario. In short, it will enable us to continue to build Ontario up. That is why I ask the members of this Legislature to support the budget measures act of 2015.

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

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Is this the hour speech?

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

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Thank you very much, Speaker. I look forward to the opportunity very shortly to give a one-hour dissertation on this.

Interjections.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: It will be fascinating, scintillating. Quite frankly, this is nothing more than an attempt to double down on the misguided 2015 budget. This is a politically motivated, very cynical, last-minute finance bill that we had no previous knowledge of.

I have to tell you, Speaker, when you have a budget briefing and they hand you a binder, a 200-page binder, and in the very next breath they say, "Now, do you have any questions about it?" what else can you ask other than, "Why did you pick a black binder?" I mean, I hadn't even opened it yet and they're asking for our input on it.

Over the weekend, I did actually have a chance to read it, so I do look forward to offering my comments at length. As I said, very shortly I will speak for an hour on this. I'm looking forward to debating this. Sadly, we have

a majority government in Ontario and no doubt they'll pass their bill, but I do look forward to getting in committee and bringing—because I also know they'll invoke closure. They've invoked closure on just about every other bill that we've debated. Sadly, everybody in the Legislature won't have a chance to speak to this. But when we do get to committee, we will have several amendments that we will be bringing to committee, especially looking forward to removing from this—some would call it an omnibus bill—the section on hydro and the section on the Trillium Trust.

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

Mr. Taras Natyshak: I was quite surprised that debate was—well, just the opening statements from the government on budget measures, Bill 144, were limited to 16 minutes: five minutes from the finance minister and the remainder of the time from his associate minister. That's not a lot of time to hear from the government as to what the content of the bill is and its ramifications.

We know, in our area, exactly how people feel about this government's initiatives when it comes to stimulating our economy and supporting good public policy. It has been lackluster at best. In fact, it has been disastrous, and it has harmed a lot of people.

Some of the things I picked up from the associate minister: Infrastructure investments that were made over the last period of time that she indicated are said to have reduced the unemployment rate 1% lower than what they would have had they not spent money on infrastructure. It's hilarious that that's the claim they make, that unemployment could have been a lot worse had we not spent any money on infrastructure. "You're lucky we even spent a dime," is what they're saying. Now we're going to burn the furniture to heat the house with the sale of Ontario Hydro.

I recall in this House—I was elected in 2011. I recall then the finance minister of the day. His name was Dwight Duncan. He was from my area, from Windsor-Tecumseh. He talked about the need to bring in the HST. Remember that, the harmonization of the GST and the PST? He claimed that it was going to create 600,000 jobs in this province. Anybody remember that, the 600,000 jobs? We have seen a massive exodus over the last 10 years, with 300,000 jobs in manufacturing alone. To claim that they're going to support horse racing after they devastated horse racing in Ontario is another laughable prospect coming out of this government. I look forward to the debate, and I hope we hear a lot more from the government.

1400

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

Ms. Ann Hoggarth: I'm speaking in favour of this bill, particularly for one area: Contraband tobacco is a significant component of Ontario's underground economy. It undermines provincial health objectives under the Smoke-Free Ontario Strategy, it results in less tobacco tax revenue for critical public services, and it

compromises public safety through links with organized crime. As an educator, the changes we are making in this area are very important to me. The changes that we are making in regard to contraband tobacco should help to reduce or even stop the flow of contraband tobacco to the teenagers in the schoolyards, who are currently purchasing such products.

Other proposed changes in the Budget Measures Act, 2015, include improving and streamlining the regulation and promotion of the horse racing industry in Ontario; enhancing benefits for injured workers—I think this has been a long time coming, and it will be a great asset for injured workers—also, improving the management of corporate land forfeited to the province. This is an area that needs to be corrected, and I think we're going to make that much better for all involved.

I urge everyone to pay attention to this bill. Yes, it's great that some people decided to read it now, but you should know that I think if you went to my constituency and these things were explained to them—they very clearly think that we are doing important work in this area.

I urge you to support the bill.

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

Mr. Bill Walker: It's my pleasure to speak to Bill 144, the Budget Measures Act, 2015.

I think one of the NDP members of the House stated that it's very interesting that they have an hour leadoff for this, yet they've only chosen to take 16 minutes—something as significant as the budget and the impact the Hydro sale and all of their measures in the budget are going to have, and yet they don't even use their full hour. It makes you wonder what they're trying to slide through here.

Both the Electricity Act and the Trillium Trust Act should be pulled out of this bill and debated separately. These are very significant, substantive measures, and we need to understand that and be able to have the opportunity to debate and hold them to account.

In regard to the Electricity Act, the Auditor General confirmed in 2011 that the government had collected enough money from the debt retirement charge to remove that charge from Ontario's hydro bills, yet this Liberal government has chosen not to remove that until 2018. So a government that has had all this time, 12 years, to do that are telling us it's paid off—but I'm not certain that the people of Ontario truly trust that they have. Otherwise, why would they not take it off right away?

The other thing I'm concerned about is where they actually have the ability to utilize this money. They're suggesting that the money could go into the Trillium Trust, but there's a loophole that allows only a portion of the proceeds to actually go into the Trillium Trust. That allows the government to use it wherever they want, to be able to make themselves look good—particularly, I trust, in 2018, as we get close to budget time. Mr. Speaker, it's inappropriate.

The money from the sale of Hydro One originally was in legislation that said it had to go to paying off that debt. They've had their 12 years. They've continually added to those debts across our province. And yet, here's a chance, when they actually are doing a fire sale, nonetheless, to take that and pay it all down, as opposed to putting it into things that they will use for their own self-serving purposes.

So I'm very, very concerned, as I believe the people of Ontario would be concerned, with this government and how they've managed debt till now; that they've actually not taken the opportunity to pay down that debt, which would allow us to do a lot of different things across our province, and particularly not spend so much on interest payments.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): That concludes our questions and comments. The member for York South–Weston has two minutes to reply.

Mrs. Laura Albanese: I want to thank the members for their comments.

I look forward to hearing the member from Nipissing's comments on the bill. He did indicate that he will speak at length, so I look forward to that.

Thank you to the member from Essex. I just wanted to point out that it wasn't my opinion; it was the Conference Board of Canada that said these investments would lower the employment rate by almost one percentage point relative to where it would otherwise have been. It wasn't my opinion; it is that of the Conference Board of Canada.

He also spoke about the horse racing industry. Yes, the plan reflects the willingness of many in the industry and the government to work together in a new partnership so that we can ensure long-term success for this important industry in our province.

I also want to thank the member from Barrie for her comments on what is at heart to her in this bill, and the member from Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound. I wanted to also correct the member from Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound, who speaks of a fire sale of Hydro One. It is not a fire sale. This is being done in phases in a very balanced and prudent way, I would say, so that we have a chance to see what the reaction of the market is. The first tranche of 15% has been sold and the government still owns 84% of Hydro One. It is not a fire sale; it is a staged process. I just wanted him to take note of that.

Mr. Speaker, my time is up, but I want to encourage all members to support this bill because it's the way that we support our province.

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

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Thank you, Speaker, and good afternoon. I am pleased to be able to speak for the next hour on this.

As I said earlier, this quite frankly is nothing more than an attempt by this government to double down on this very misguided 2015 budget. This is a politically motivated omnibus bill, cynically aimed at wedging opposition people. Speaker, I won't get into that today; I'm going to get into the meat of this because we can see this for what it is.

We will be seeking amendments at committee. Again, as I mentioned in my two-minute hit earlier, we know that they're going to invoke closure. As the member from Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound mentioned a few minutes ago, they had a full hour to debate this—it was actually our NDP member who mentioned that as well, a full hour to debate this. They used 16 minutes. That's very telling.

This tells me this is going to zip through. They are not going to let everybody in the Legislature speak to this. They are going to invoke closure, like they have for all of these other bills. They talk about openness and transparency, but it's only talk. We've seen nothing but talk on that in the Legislature. Every time there's an opportunity to put actions behind those hollow words, we don't see the actions; we see more of these types of things where they cut off debate and don't let members speak to the bill.

We are going to ask that certain schedules be removed and introduced as separate pieces. I'm going to talk about those now. The Trillium Trust is one of the first ones, and also the Electricity Act.

The Liberals here are attempting to make—I'll call them sleight-of-hand changes to the Trillium Trust Act and the Electricity Act, and they're going to hide these amongst these 23 other schedules in the bill, hoping that we're all not going to notice. Some of the other 21 schedules—some of them—are housekeeping issues. Some may be long overdue. They've had 12 years to bring these issues to the floor. They haven't. They put them all in a big pot and snuck in very important Trillium Trust and very important Electricity Act changes to bail themselves out of the trouble that they're in.

The changes to the Electricity Act and the Trillium Trust Act in particular need to be pulled out of this bill and brought forward separately. They are so substantive, far too substantive to be included in this omnibus bill with the other changes. They're ramming this bill through the House because it's obvious they forgot to include a majority of these changes when they did the 2015 budget, or they're trying to put a blanket over the bad news that's coming on Thursday, the fall economic statement which, I continue to announce in this Legislature, will be 11 days late—from their own transparency act that they are breaking as well.

1410

Let's talk about the Electricity Act, Speaker. The Auditor General said, back in 2011, that the government had collected enough money from the debt retirement charge to remove the charge from Ontario Hydro's bills. Let me just repeat that. I was brand new. I came in in October 2011, and the Auditor General brought in a report a month later. I was energy critic at the time, and I sat in the media room for the first time and listened to the Auditor General. It was the first time I had seen an AG's report. The auditor—"he" at the time—said to the Liberal government, "You have already collected enough money. So where did the money go?" I remember he asked the finance minister, Dwight Duncan at the time, "You have three months to bring me a report to show me where the

money went, because you've collected"—at the time it was about \$8.7 billion, and the debt was \$7.8 billion. So he asked, "Where did the extra billion go?" Minister Duncan left; he resigned from the Legislature. So we never did get that report.

In addition to confirming that there had been enough money collected in the debt retirement charge, we had some other revelations. The government is confirming today that the debt charge won't be removed until 2018. This is fully seven more years that they have been charging about a billion dollars a year, incidentally. It's somewhere between the high \$900 millions and just over \$1 billion a year; it fluctuates every year. What did they do with that additional \$7 billion? The Auditor General is asking, "What did you do with that extra billion?" Seven more years have now gone by, and we're actually at \$8 billion. What did you do with that money? We know it has been artificially keeping their skyrocketing deficit down in the \$8-billion, \$9-billion, \$10-billion range with this extra \$8 billion.

When you combine the two debt terms, the government is forcing us, basically, to trust that they have paid off the debt with the revenue from the debt retirement charge. That's what they're saying: "In 2018—trust us—it's all going to be paid." But I have to ask you again, Speaker: Considering what the auditor told us, that the debt was paid in 2011 and they're still charging the debt retirement charge every year—\$1 billion or so a year—what the heck did these guys do with all of our money?

I'm going to read—I know the member will be thrilled at this—from my January 23, 2014, Fedeli Focus on Finance, when we disclosed something that we found quite inadvertently. If you look at what the Ministry of Finance had said on August 18, 2011—this was about two months before the 2011 election—they told the public, in print, "Amount of debt to be paid off, \$7.8 billion." That's what they told us the debt retirement charge was.

Only nine months later, after the election, they announced—they came clean and said, the Ontario Ministry of Finance, May 15, 2012: "Amount of debt to be paid off, \$11.9 billion." Somehow the debt, which was a fixed debt, grew to \$11.9 billion. So, the government—we announced this in the Legislature—secretly borrowed \$4 billion against the Hydro debt, and did not tell anybody in the Legislature about it. In fact, Speaker, if you look at the annual report of the OEFC for 2004, it shows the debt at \$7.8 billion. In 2005, 2006, 2007, 2008, 2009, 2010, 2011—each and every one of those annual reports—you can go online and look up what they had the debt in 2004 listed at, and it was \$7.8 billion. The next year, it had gone down and gone down. But every single annual report, they show that the 2004 debt was at \$7.8 billion.

In the 2013 annual report, they restated that amount, for the first time publicly: It was \$11.9 billion. So they had secretly borrowed \$4 billion and never told us about it; never told us the next year, and the next year. In fact—I have to be careful with the words I want to use here, Speaker—they said one thing when the complete

opposite of that was fact. They told us the debt was \$7.8 billion. The OEFC printed this, that our debt was \$7.8 billion. Every year, they printed that, and then, after the election, lo and behold, they corrected it and put it at \$11.9 billion.

That was bad enough, that they had been fooling us for all those years, but the worst thing is that they did something—they borrowed \$4 billion and didn't tell us—with that money. We still, to this minute, don't know what they did with our money. But that's why the debt retirement charge stayed on all these years. They had those extra billions to pay back that they didn't tell the taxpayers.

When you ask, "Where did all this money go if it wasn't paying off \$7.8 billion in the residual stranded debt?", the auditor gave us a major clue in his 2011 report: "External legal advisers we engaged to assist us ... confirmed our view that section 85 of the Electricity Act, 1998 (Act), which is titled 'The Residual Stranded Debt and the Debt Retirement Charge,' allows the DRC to be used for any purpose that is in accordance with the government's "objectives and purposes, and not just the retirement of the residual stranded debt." The source is the Office of the Auditor General of Ontario 2011 Annual Report, page 12.

So now we know: They found a loophole in the debt retirement charge bill, and instead of charging the people on their hydro bills for the debt retirement charge and lowering the actual charge, they have been using all that money to help artificially lower their deficits. That's what these guys have been up to.

In addition, the government has made changes to the Electricity Act that take money guaranteed to municipalities and allow it to go towards balancing their budget. The government is also allowing the taxes from subsidiaries of Hydro One to go to whatever project the government wants and not paying down the \$26 billion in hydro debt—so, again Speaker, here we are—which will turn out to be a case of burning the furniture to heat the home.

We talk about that in this Legislature all the time. Let me explain a little bit about that. You have this government having a fire sale of Hydro One. They're taking that money—they call it \$9 billion; the Financial Accountability Officer says that the actual cash at the end of the day, after all expenses and the tax which is non-cash are taken out, could be as low as \$1.4 billion. But let's just go with the Liberals' number in Liberal math to begin with. It's \$9 billion.

So, you owe \$26 billion in your hydro—you still owe that. They're going to ostensibly sell hydro for \$9 billion, put \$4 billion against their deficit and \$5 billion will be used to lower the debt. Speaker, we still owe \$21 billion after that. We're still going to have interest payments on that \$21 billion, but now, we don't have, first of all, the principal to apply against there, but we also don't have the revenue coming in, every day, every week, every month, every year, from when we owned Hydro One. So, now you've got this debt—the only way they're going to be able to pay for it is to raise your hydro bills.

We know that this year, 2015, between the hydro increase on May 1, the hydro increase on November 1 and the hydro increase that will come January 1—that's a 33% increase to your hydro bill in eight months. In eight little, short months, it's up 33%. It's going to go even higher now when you don't have the revenue from Hydro coming in. The Financial Accountability Officer told us, plain and simple. If you want to do this—and he's not agreeing that you do it—then you go borrow rather than sell. I would just advocate, lower your expenses and cut your spending, because they've obviously—I'll talk about it in a little while, where this money has been wasted. So cut the waste. Cut that spending and use that method, but if you're not going to do that, then go borrow the money, according to the FAO, because it's far cheaper than when you sell this asset. You're going to have a one-time payment and no revenue forever. You are putting Ontario in a much further precarious position than we've already seen this government put us in.

1420

Think about when they took office. Our debt in Ontario was \$139 billion. It took 20-some Premiers 137 years to get that debt up to \$139 billion, and the Liberals have been able to double it in 10 years and more than double it now in the 12 years they've been in power. We're very concerned that the changes and the sale of hydro, combined with the debt, will only grow, meaning that rates will have to go up to offset the ever-growing debt. I'll chat a bit more about that later, but I want to talk about the Trillium Trust because it's integrated in this whole nonsense about this fire sale.

The government claims that they're dedicating the revenue from the sale of Hydro One and other properties to the Trillium Trust, but yet again, this act contains a loophole allowing the minister to put only—and I'll use the word—"a portion" of proceeds to the Trillium Trust. We've talked about that before. Our party brought amendments at the last budget. We brought amendments when this government wanted to be able to sell an asset, and the operative words are "may" and "portion." They "may" use a "portion" of the asset sale to put into the Trillium Trust; that doesn't say they must put it all. So we brought amendments into committee that asked to change the word "may" to "must": You must put the money in the Trillium Trust. Liberals voted it down. They didn't like that "must." They like "may" because that gives them the flexibility and the wiggle room.

Then, instead of "portion," we had a motion that you had to change it all. Well, the Liberals didn't like that either because they had no intention of putting that money where it's intended to go. So they voted that down because they wanted, as I'll call it, the "wiggle room" again. They may call it "flexibility."

We brought a very simple motion that said, "Let's let the Auditor General, within 90 days of when you sell a significant asset"—within 90 days, the Auditor General will report to this Legislature some very simple facts: What did you sell, how much did you get for it and what did you do with the money? That's pretty simple. Again,

the Liberal government voted it down. They do not want us to hear what they did with the money. They do not want that.

What we've been saying all along is that the money they get from the sale of an asset will never, ever go to what they're saying it's going to, period. They're going to take the revenue from the sale of Hydro One and put it towards balancing their budget, towards their deficit. There's no hesitation for us to stand in this Legislature and say that. I'm going to prove this yet again. Our leader, Patrick Brown, has stood in this Legislature and proved it day after day, week after week.

I will use this budget opportunity to yet again bring the facts in front, and I'll use the Liberals' own budget, page 45. I'll talk to you, Speaker, about where this wiggle room is and the proof in the pudding that they have absolutely no intention of ever using a nickel of this sale of Hydro One towards what they say is transit and infrastructure. That is absolute nonsense. Not a nickel will ever go there, and I will now take the next bit of time and prove that to you.

It has never been about infrastructure. This whole charade has never once—it's all about scrambling, like they did with the debt retirement charge money, the \$1 billion that the auditor showed us, the \$7 billion that we found. It has never been all about this infrastructure. It's all about paying for past scandals and the crippling debt, and we'll prove that to you here in a moment as well.

When you look at something that we saw today or that we read over the weekend—it's brand new, Speaker. It's called section 7, page 3 of schedule 22 of the budget document that we were handed last week. There's a sentence here that says, as part of the authorized expenditures, "To reimburse the crown for expenditures incurred by the crown, directly or indirectly, for a purpose prescribed in paragraph 1." There's a little box where it gives you a little highlight and explains things to you. "Proposed section 7 of the act would specify that an amount not exceeding the balance of the Trillium Trust may"—"may," again—"be used to fund, or to reimburse the crown...." That's the key. That's brand new. We now have even further proof that this was never intended for infrastructure. The infrastructure budget that they proposed was already fully funded. I'll get to that in a moment.

This is part of the shell game that will ostensibly put money into transit and infrastructure but take out the money that was already there.

So this is "to reimburse the crown, for construction or acquisition of infrastructure"—and then they say infrastructure is defined in another section.

So here we are, page 3, section 7 of schedule 22—absolute proof. This is what this whole charade of this 200-page document that they handed—again, there are some other important changes they've made and things they could have done over the last 12 years but never got around to doing. They've buried in there one sentence that is sneakily put in here—in 200 pages, several paragraphs, hundreds and hundreds and hundreds of

documents, and they've got one sentence that this is all about. It's all to put that one sentence in there and, quite frankly, get away with it. But we read the sentence. It is to reimburse the crown for infrastructure. So now we know. It's laid bare.

I'll temper myself, Speaker.

Now we know that the Liberals are trying to get this through the Legislature, playing this shell game with the people's crown jewel.

Rates are going to go up. We're not going to have any additional improvement to infrastructure to show for it.

I want to go back to something the Financial Accountability Officer said, that our leader, Patrick Brown, has talked about in this Legislature over and over. I refer to page 45 of the budget. I took a section of page 45 of the budget out, and in the recent issue of Fedeli Focus on Finance—it was all about the facts about the sale of Hydro One. You can go on fedeli.com, which is my legislative site—because this is not a political document.

Interjection.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: This is a fact-fed document. You can download this.

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: Facts by Fedeli?

Mr. Victor Fedeli: It is facts by Fedeli. We could change it. Thank you.

Let's just go and see what we're talking about, Speaker. Again, the 2015 budget, on page 45, quotes what they had presented in the 2014 budget, so I'm going to talk about that for a second. "Projected asset optimization target"—that's their spin for the selling of the assets. In 2014-15, it's \$1.1 billion. In 2015-16, it's a billion dollars. The next year, it's a half billion dollars. And in the last year, it's a half billion dollars. So they plan on \$3.1 billion of asset sales, which included \$1.1 billion of the General Motors shares. Excluding those shares, there's \$2 billion more over the next three years they were going to add into the Trillium Trust for infrastructure. We know that. That's a fact. It's printed in the 2014 budget, and it's repeated in the 2015 budget. All of that was to fund \$130 billion worth of infrastructure. That was announced in 2014.

Again, as our leader, Patrick Brown, has stated and we've all stated in this Legislature many times, the \$130 billion of infrastructure was set in 2014 and did not need or include the sale of Hydro One to make it happen. Now, they are introducing the sale of Hydro One and pretending that it's for the infrastructure. But they didn't need the money. They showed us that they did not need that money. They never listed that money. So, what is the money really for? Well, we go back to this binder where they are now allowed, when this bill passes, to reimburse the crown for construction or acquisition of infrastructure.

1430

Now we know. The jig's up, Speaker. We now know that the sale of Hydro One is to pay back the crown for the money they are spending on infrastructure. It was never, ever, to be new money. They have been telling us one thing, when what we have been saying all along is

absolutely true. We have laid that bare. In fact, back in April 2015, the Ottawa Citizen figured it out right away:

“A reasonable person might wonder why we need to sell most of a significant public asset ... just to keep doing what we have been doing for years.

“The real answer, I suspect, is that putting some billions of new money into the province’s transit trust will enable the government to quietly shift existing money to help it reduce the deficit or pay for other spending.”

The Ottawa Citizen laid this bare back in April. We have been standing in this Legislature day after day, week after week, month after month, saying the same thing, proving that in their own budget—page 45—they showed us that the sale of the GM shares for \$1.1 billion was going into the transit trust, but that only left \$2 billion over the next three years to raise.

This has all been an awful, awful shell game, Speaker, and I think that when the Financial Accountability Officer laid this nonsense in front of us, as well, he called it for what it really is: They’re broke; they’ve overspent—I’ll talk about some of the spending in the next few pages. They got caught. They can’t balance their own budget. In fact, the Financial Accountability Officer told us—after his independent report on the Hydro sale, a week later, he came out with another independent report on the state of our finances and said, “No, no. They’re not going to balance the budget in 2017-18; it will be off by \$3.5 billion.”

What they have done so far is that they’ve quietly borrowed against the energy sector \$4 billion and didn’t tell us about it. I’m pretty sure that’s already frittered away, so they are digging deeper in the couch now for bigger nickels and dimes; maybe we’re up to quarters and loonies now. They are digging in the couch for money. They are going to find it in the pension tax. They’re certainly going to find it in the upcoming carbon tax. But excluding those, we now know that the sale of Hydro One—we’ve laid it bare—is not for transit or infrastructure; it is to bail them out from their deficit.

We then move on to other areas of this presentation. We’ll talk about alcohol reform. We support greater market access and the liberalization of beer sales in Ontario, plain and simple. We always have. That being said, the government’s idea of freeing up beer sales is writing more and more regulations and rules: limits on where to sell, how to sell, how much you can sell. All they are doing is bundling this up in a big hunk of red tape with a bow on the top of it.

The Premier called it—when she was distracting us from the sale of Hydro One with that announcement—the biggest innovation in alcohol since the Prohibition. I’m thinking, “Selling a six-pack in the corner store—this is your big deal?” Speaker, if you live in northern Ontario and rural Ontario, there are 218 places that already sell beer and wine outside of a Beer Store or a liquor store. Maybe in the GTA, you’re not aware of that. But I can tell you that if I want to drive to Nipissing township and go into Young’s general store—you can get your fishing licence there, you can gas up, get your boat oil and gas,

and they also have a hand-painted sign outside that says, “Beer and wine for sale.” You can go to Young’s general store in Nipissing township and buy beer and wine today. This is not a big revelation. This is not the six-pack at the corner store that’s the greatest thing since Prohibition. The Premier said that; she said it more than once.

North Bay, where I live, is 45 minutes from the Quebec border. We have a big company, Tembec, that’s just across the border—where there’s cheaper energy, by the way, Speaker. The 1,000 employees there enjoy that opportunity. But if you drive to Tembec from North Bay and you stop at the little corner store, the only store on the way there, in Eldee, Ontario, you can pick up a fishing licence, you can buy gas—it’s the only gas station on the way there—and again, there’s a little hand-painted sign: “Beer and wine for sale.” You can whip in there and stock up on the way to the cottage, if that’s what you want to do.

This is no big revelation. There are 218 places like that. A lot of them are in northern and rural Ontario. Maybe it’s a big deal in Toronto, but I’ll tell you, Speaker, it’s been going on every single day that I can remember.

Mr. Bill Walker: You can still get an Ontario Northland ticket there for the train.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Well, no. I’m afraid the train has been cancelled, but that’s part of the earlier scandals that we’ll get into shortly here.

Ontario brewers want a fair opportunity to sell their product. We all understand that. But the Wynne Liberals here, their decision to limit the annual supermarket beer sales to the equivalent of less than 300 six-packs a day isn’t going to have a significant impact on job creation in the province. Again, a lot of this is big smoke and mirrors so that we’ll be talking about this rather than the fire sale of Ontario Hydro.

Only this government would penalize a company for being too successful. We seem to do that in Ontario a lot. Rather than foster growth and encourage business, these people want to place arbitrary caps on sales for providing a successful service to Ontario. “My God, you’re doing well. We’d better stop you. We better figure out how to tax you or figure out how to stop it.”

Contraband tobacco is another issue. Every single fall, and again in the spring budget, the Minister of Finance gloats about how he’s going to crack down on contraband tobacco in Ontario, but never does a thing. I have been here for four years listening to it. As mayor of the city of North Bay for two terms before that, I listened to it. There are 12 years of listening to all talk and no action whatsoever.

This bill, which is in that black binder, increases the reporting mechanisms for raw-leaf producers, but it takes no reasonable action to crack down on illegal sales. Our MPP Todd Smith’s bill, the Smoke-Free Schools Act, takes that action by suspending a driver’s licence if they are caught transporting tobacco, and creates education programs for kids. If the minister really wanted to do something, was serious about contraband tobacco, he’d

put that bill within this omnibus legislation, because Todd Smith's bill is a bill that everybody in this Legislature should get behind.

Let's take a second, Speaker, and talk about the motivation behind this bill, Bill 144. First of all, as this Legislature knows full well, the Deputy Premier told us loudly and clearly on W5 only a couple of weeks ago, "We're out of money"—shocking. I watched that W5. I almost fell over when I heard her say that. Of course, we've been saying that since the day we got here, but finally the light went on, and according to our Deputy Premier—I haven't heard the finance minister come up with that yet, but the Deputy Premier said we're out of money. We're going to talk about why we're out of money.

As we look across the street here to the south, there's the MaRS building. The people within MaRS do exceptional work. It's an important component of economic development and research in Ontario. But the building that they're in has nothing to do with the good work that they do. The building that they're in was owned by a United States-owned real estate firm that was struggling and about to be in serious trouble.

1440

This government, again, without any knowledge of the Legislature—this only came out during the last election when we were handed a brown envelope that gave us the details and the facts came out. We only seem to get the facts from the Financial Accountability Officer, the Auditor General, the OPP, or when the envelopes come under the door. That's the only time in this Legislature that I've seen that we've actually got facts. So the brown envelope comes under the door, and it told us that a US realtor was being paid approximately \$410 million to be bailed out. When people say, "Vic, what would your party do?", well, you stop that kind of expenditure. That's only one that we found. Can you imagine, Speaker, how many of these deals have been done that we do not know about? But we found out through an envelope under the door that proved to be correct, that this government bailed out the US-owned realtor from this building. It cost the taxpayer about \$410 million.

I think there's still more of that coming out—all the revelations. It was always "deny, deflect," and, in the gas plant scandal, "delete." That's what we know from this government, which is always denying that until the hard cold facts came out. In additional freedom-of-information requests we now know the real truth about that. It cost the taxpayer—it cost us all—\$410 million.

Then, of course, there is the \$1.1 billion spent to cancel two gas plants. My remaining 25 minutes I could use just talking about the gas plant scandal because—

Mr. Bill Walker: There are two billion reasons why.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Yes.

As you know, Speaker, the government insisted that it cost \$40 million to cancel when it took an Auditor General to prove to us and the rest of the province that it was actually \$1.1 billion. Again, when they say, "Vic, what would you guys do differently?", well, there is a

pretty good example of the kind of waste and scandal that surrounds this government. When you go back to the Deputy Premier when she says, "We're out of money," we now know why: Another \$1 billion was spent there.

Smart meters are another great example of yet another scandal. All along we were told it was going to be \$1 billion and then, of course, it took—yet again—another Auditor General's report to come out and tell us—

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: You've got to do this: "One billion dollars!"

Mr. Victor Fedeli: You mock me. I'll tell you, Dalton McGuinty mocked me as well. I remember standing in this Legislature, Speaker, and when Dalton McGuinty was telling us it was \$40 million, I brought evidence to say it was almost \$1 billion. I stood and said, "Speaker, we have proof here that it's \$890 million." I remember the Premier laughing and mocking me just like I'm being mocked now. He said, "Oh, pretty soon it's going to be \$1 billion. No, wait; it's going to be \$2 billion." It took an Auditor General to tell this Legislature it really was \$1.1 billion, that they had been telling us all along one thing when we knew the exact opposite was true. It was \$1.1 billion. So keep mocking. Keep mocking. Keep mocking. They've gone silent, so I'll continue.

The smart meters: Again, they—

Interjections.

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

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Thank you, Speaker.

Smart meters: They told us it was \$1 billion as well. Once in a while, you want to try to take the government's word for something, but again, we felt skeptical about \$1 billion. Research gets done; you dig in. You ask the Auditor General to look at this, and sure enough, what does the Auditor General come out and tell us? It wasn't \$1 billion; it was \$2 billion. You add the Ornge air ambulance scandal on top of this and that's almost \$1 billion; that's almost yet another billion. All we've got here is a government that is shrouded—

Interjection.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: I understand that this member from Barrie, who's heckling, wasn't here during those scandals. We were here every day, and it took an Auditor General to be able to come out and tell us the truth. The truth is, you spent \$2 billion on smart meters. You spent \$1 billion on Ornge air ambulance.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): The member for Nipissing has the floor. I would ask the members on both sides of the House to refrain from heckling so that I can hear him. Member for Nipissing—sorry to interrupt.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Obviously, Speaker, the scandals get to them, to the Liberal caucus. Even though some of them weren't here day after day to watch us being told in this Legislature one story when, brewing in this gas plant scandal hearing committee room, another story was brewing, that story finally came out. Even though the Liberal government paid \$10,000 to have files deleted, we still got to some level of the truth to understand that

there's a scandal here. It cost the taxpayers of the province of Ontario more than \$1 billion, and the government tried to hide that by deleting files. We now know that. That's all fact.

What's the result of all that? Let's move on to the result of all that. Of course, we all know that Moody's has given us two credit downgrades. That's a direct result, an absolute direct result, of this government spending, as I've just outlined, \$4 billion in money that they wasted on scandals instead of putting that into health care and other areas, and I'll get to that shortly as well. One recent analysis suggests that that has cost us \$430 million a year in interest.

The Conference Board of Canada told us loudly and clearly as well that this province can't meet its pledge to balance the books. The Auditor General told us in her last report that the debt continues to grow faster than the province's economy. The Ontario Chamber of Commerce in their appropriately titled report on our economy—the report is called *How Bad Is It?* That's the title, Speaker. They used words such as “crisis” and “dire” in their report. That's what's sprinkled throughout their report called *How Bad Is It?* Imagine having to name a report that. The Canadian Federation of Independent Business told us that 97% of businesses in Ontario are concerned about our economy.

So, Speaker, we've set the financial stage here and now we know what the government has done. They've decided to have a fire sale of assets, which is included right here in Bill 144, schedule 22. They started a year ago when they borrowed the money to buy the General Motors shares. Last year, they sold the shares for \$1.1 billion, and instead of doing the prudent thing—now, think, they borrowed \$1 billion, they bought the shares, and then they sold the shares, and, instead of doing the prudent thing and putting the money back, lowering the debt by giving the money back to where they got it, instead, they plunked it into their operating costs. We now know that. It's in their own budget, on page 45 of the 2015 budget. This year they are going to have the fire sale of our valuable asset of Hydro One, and now we know through the Financial Accountability Officer and through this document of theirs, page 3 of section 7, schedule 22, that that's where the money's going. It's now going to pay down debt and deficit. They've put a line in here that is the line that tells us that it's not intended to go into transit; it's “to reimburse the crown” for the “construction or acquisition of infrastructure.” The money that was already in there is now coming out to pay the debt and deficit.

I read you the line from the Ottawa Citizen. We really know that you cannot put it better than that. They nailed it down. They proved the point that, back in 2014, when they announced the \$130 billion for infrastructure, they did not need the sale of Hydro One.

The Financial Accountability Officer—let me read a quote or two from him. He said, “The province's fiscal position deteriorates because of the loss of income generated by the sale.” So you know that this is going to

hurt us in the long term. It's going to hurt the financial picture. He also told us that this is really a financing decision: Do you borrow or do you sell? That's what this is all about. It has nothing to do with what the government continues to say, that that is money going into transit. We now know that. It's not about transit. It's, do you borrow or do you sell an asset? I actually would go a little further and suggest it's, do you just start managing your finances the way we do at our own homes? Again, we've seen the GM shares; I've told you that story. I told you the story about how we're going to sell off—for what could be as little as \$1.4 billion—hydro and lose \$700 million a year. Again, we're burning the furniture to heat the house. What happens next year when you don't have—

Mr. Bill Walker: What will they sell then?

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Well, I'll tell you what they are going to sell then. We've already learned that in this book as well—buried in this book. We now know that they are going to sell the OPG building across the street here. They are going to be selling the LCBO warehouse. They are going to be selling the lake lands property in the south end on the shore line. These are the things they are going to continue to sell off to try to lower their deficit.

1450

One of these days, you're going to run out of things to sell to pay your bills, but your bills are still high. That's the real point. That's what we mean by burning the furniture to heat the house. When you run out of furniture, if you haven't put in a mechanism to heat your house, you're going to go cold, and that's what has happened to the investors in Ontario: They are going cold in Ontario.

This is the same group, that is selling Hydro One, that only a few months ago sold Ontario Northland, the 112-year-old company that's in northern Ontario that runs transportation and communications throughout the north. This is the same government, that's selling Hydro One, that sold Ontera. That is the telecommunications division. They sold it for \$6 million. First of all, they spent, as we disclosed in this Legislature, \$6.5 million on lawyers and consultants just to get \$6 million for a sale. In any language, spending \$6.5 million on a consultant to tell you to sell something for \$6 million doesn't seem practical to me.

Again, it took an Auditor General—not the government; the government never told us. I've asked, in order paper questions, all of these questions and never get any answers. It took an Auditor General to tell us, “By the way, the asset was worth more than that.” So they sold it for \$6 million and spent \$6.5 million for consultants to tell you what to sell it for. The Auditor General told us they lost \$61 million on that sale. Talk about giving away the farm. The government lost \$61 million selling it. We're going to let these guys handle multi-billion dollar assets when they can't even transact something as small as that and, sadly, as precious as that to the people of Ontario, the people of northern Ontario.

Now it's gone. All the ongoing revenue from that asset is gone. They lost \$60,937,000, Speaker. Can you

imagine that? They knew they were losing that when they went into it. They knew that. They absolutely knew that when they went into the fire sale of Ontera, and yet they went ahead. There were seven times we talked about that in this Legislature, and I submitted order paper questions. Not once did the government stand up and say, "Look, we're going to get \$6 million for this, and I'm sorry but we're going to lose \$61 million."

It took an Auditor General; it always takes, as I said earlier, the OPP, the Auditor General, a brown envelope under the door, the Financial Accountability—it takes somebody else to give us the truth about what's happening in Ontario.

The Financial Accountability Officer also told us the initial 15% sale would significantly reduce the province's deficit. Again, he told us that. This is proven out today on the fact that they are going to reimburse the crown for the construction or acquisition of infrastructure. The Financial Accountability Officer told us the same thing: This money is going to reduce the deficit. It has nothing to do with transit. It's a shell game, and the Financial Accountability Officer laid it bare, Speaker. He told us that it was going to reduce the deficit, and he also told us that in the years following the sale of 60% of Hydro One, the province's budget balance would be worse than it would have been without the sale.

So let's talk about what this bill doesn't address, because there are lots of local issues that I have that I would like to speak about as well. Again, we heard loud and clear on W5 from the Deputy Premier that we're out of money. We now know that the direct consequence of our seeing the Liberal government with such massive debt and deficits are the cuts that have happened in my riding. Some 350 front-line health care workers have been fired from North Bay regional hospital. Nobody denies that number. It's 350. Two months ago alone, 158 people were fired from the hospital, bringing it to 350, which includes 100 nurses. These are 350 front-line health care workers and, over the last years, that 350 includes 100 nurses. Absolute and definitive, Speaker. They were out in front of my office, protesting the Liberal government. I cannot repeat in this Legislature what their chant was, but I'll tell you, it was nothing kind about the Liberal government.

Besides them—standing shoulder to shoulder with them—were members of the Nipissing University faculty. They are on strike today. Our university has been closed for three weeks. The students who expected to graduate in December—their year is now threatened. These young men and women who were leaving North Bay to go and start their careers are now scrambling to find a place to live, because they have given up their apartments at the end of December, and scrambling to get their job start date moved back. That is the reality of what is happening when you have a government that is out of control. The Liberal government fired 54 workers at the university, including 22 faculty.

Speaker, this is part of the problem that is happening right across Ontario. You've got a government that just

doesn't know how to stop their scandals and their waste, and it all rolls downhill until it hits these students and their families. All their problems are like big boulders rolling downhill, and they just rammed these poor students and their parents. Their parents are phoning me on a daily basis, saying, "What are you going to do? My son was scheduled to start a job in the new year. He can't go now. What are you going to do about it?" I asked the Premier, "What are you going to do about it?" That's the question I asked the Premier. I sent her a letter on Thursday. I'm looking forward to the response, Speaker. We also have 43 people at Ontario Northland who were fired by this government, and now Ontario Northland, the one-time transportation and communications company—I guess, after all these decades, I have to get used to calling them the transportation company in the north—is in a lockout. They've been locked out.

We have 350 front-line health care workers fired, 43 people at Ontario Northland fired and now they're in a lockout, and 54 people at Nipissing University fired and now they're on strike. This crisis, this chaos, is caused by the Liberal government, which cannot manage its finances in Ontario. So, when we talk about—

Laughter.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: It's funny to you, member from Barrie, but it's not funny to the parents in Nipissing. I tell you, Speaker, it's a crisis that they've created, and we're looking for solutions from this government; we're looking for answers.

What will this bill do? You have things like an Assessment Act that's going to standardize the timeliness for property owners to request a rate reconsideration. There are things that make some sense in this bill, and then there are others that we just scratch our heads and wonder, "What is it doing there? What is it meant to achieve?"

You've got another schedule: the City of Toronto Act. We had a briefing today that talked about not only the City of Toronto Act but a municipalities act. This will be another way that the government is able to increase revenue to municipalities without transferring any cash and without having to take the blame for further tax increases. These are the kinds of things that we see will be happening.

Speaker, we are very, very concerned especially with the Electricity Act and the Trillium Trust Act. As the member from Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound mentioned earlier, we will be bringing amendments that suggest to the government that they take these two out, because they are so huge and so grand in the scope of what they will do to the people of Ontario. You cannot slip those into a finance bill that was casually thrown at us last week without any notice, any understanding. So you know they are up to something. I guess that's the bottom line. That's the only way I can put it. They are looking to gain revenue on the backs of municipalities, on the backs of hydro ratepayers—revenue ostensibly through the Trillium Trust. You just know what they're up to, and none of it is going to serve any value to any of the people in the province Ontario.

1500

You've got some mundane areas. One is called the Financial Administration Act. This is going to implement a common registration process for the transfer of payments to recipients. It requires businesses to provide specified information, like the address and a name, to a ministry or public entity before engaging in a financial transaction with it, such as receiving public funds. These all may be just fine. It allows the ministry or a public agency to request this information after it has begun working with a business or adviser.

These are some housekeeping issues that they have tucked into a big bill, an omnibus bill. Quite frankly, a lot of these, if they are revenue-neutral or no new net benefit to anybody, you could tuck them all in and get that kind of a bill passed. But when you've got the Trillium Trust and the energy act piled into there—these are massive. These are earth-shattering and ostensibly budget-changing items of a great magnitude. That's not where they belong.

In schedule 6, the Fiscal Transparency and Accountability Act, which I don't really see them paying any respect to—the fall economic statement should have been out in this Legislature before November 15; that's prescribed. Oops, missed that again. It's going to be 11 days late. They're eliminating the Ontario Economic Forecast Council. I can tell you, Speaker, you can see why, when you have somebody who is going to be an expert to give you the big picture. That's not what this government wants to hear about. This change in the act will remove the government's legislated requirement to consult economic experts on large-scale financial issues. For example, the economic forecast council may have easily said the Hydro One deal will have negative macro-economic effects, but the minister is choosing, again, to silence this organization rather than use its advice.

They certainly didn't like the Financial Accountability Officer's. They dismissed the Financial Accountability Office's initial independent report on Hydro One. Then they dismissed the independent report from the Financial Accountability Officer on the state of the economy.

Now they're going to silence the Ontario Economic Forecast Council. If the government can't balance the budget with their advice, how do they plan on ever balancing a budget without their advice?

There are also some big changes coming in the Forfeited Corporate Property Act. I don't think I'll get into it in the few minutes I have left, but I'm suggesting that the legal community will want to study this bill from top to bottom as well.

There are also technical things. In the Government Advertising Act, 2004, this will correct an error in the French version so that the English and the French versions are the same. Those are the kinds of things you do bundle into a bill and get it passed. These are cleaning-up little things. Of course, again, they've had, in this case, 11 years to do it, and they haven't done it, so I can see them tidying up a lot of things.

Maybe, Speaker, I'll bring the cynic out in me, because in the four years I've been here, unlike in my

two terms as mayor of the city of North Bay, where I served with pleasure, and it was such a positive attitude—here, you become cynical very quickly because, again, it always takes the OPP or an Auditor General or an envelope under your door to get to the truth around here.

Maybe the cynic in me says they collected all of these things over the years so that they can have it ready to plunk in a bill when they needed to put in a couple of serious issues that they didn't want anybody to pay any attention to, like page 3, section 7 of schedule 22—the key line in this whole thing. All of these other almost 200 pages bury that key sentence. I'm going to stand here and say it over and over until we get through to the people of Ontario that they were told one thing, but the complete opposite is true. Now we have it in writing.

You're going to see a lot about the Horse Racing Licence Act as well. I think that's an area that anybody who's involved in horse racing should go online, download and have a look at. It integrates horse racing and gaming under the Alcohol and Gaming Commission of Ontario and it eliminates the Ontario Racing Commission. The ORC, a long and storied organization, will be gone. This will now all fall under the Alcohol and Gaming Commission. When you combine schedule 9 with schedule 16, horse racing as we know it will now be a government-run industry under the umbrella of the AGCO—no longer the racing commission. These are the kinds of things that you will find are buried throughout this.

In closing, we know that the Liberals are attempting to make changes to the Trillium Trust Act and the Electricity Act and bury them in a 23-schedule bill, hoping nobody will notice. The changes to the Electricity Act and the Trillium Trust Act in particular should be pulled out of this bill and brought forward separately. They're too substantive to be included with these other changes.

They're ramming this through. We're going to see closure invoked, and I know that I stand and speak because many of our members will never have an opportunity to speak on this bill.

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

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: I want to thank the member from Nipissing for debating this very important bill and using up the whole hour lead, which is really his responsibility to his constituents, to give feedback on this bill. It's a shame the government didn't use that same opportunity to inform Ontarians about their intention of how this bill is supposedly supposed to make their lives better.

The member from Nipissing talked at length about the FAO. A little history on the FAO: It's something that the NDP brought forward when it was a minority government and got this government to agree that we install the FAO so they could have a precautionary piece to some of their financial dealings. I want to read from the Financial Accountability Officer. This is a very impressive person, because here's what he says, page 40, about this document:

“This Financial Accountability Office of Ontario ... report was prepared as an initiative of the Financial Accountability Officer. In keeping with the FAO’s mandate to provide the Legislative Assembly of Ontario with independent analysis, this report makes no recommendations.”

Isn’t that interesting: an initiative taken by somebody who’s an independent officer of this court and wants transparency and wants the public to be knowledgeable and educated on what this government is doing? They need to take a page out of the Financial Accountability Officer Act and they need to take proactive steps when they do things.

First of all, the budget bill wasn’t consulted. There was no consultation with the public. That is not proactive. They have been rewarded for bad behaviour so many times, they don’t recognize what bad behaviour is anymore. They’re so complacent with the decisions that they’ve made, they can’t even identify or recognize what a scandal is or what a bad decision selling off Hydro One is. Their behaviour across the way speaks volumes.

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

Mr. Yvan Baker: It is an honour to respond to the member for Nipissing. It’s unfortunate that I only have two minutes because there are so many things that the member opposite said that I would like to rebut and respond to. I will start by saying that when I ran for office, I was running against a party that was standing to cut 100,000 jobs in this province. How many jobs would have been lost in each of those members’ ridings? That member also ran against our platform to spend \$130 billion on infrastructure, which would create the jobs and the quality of life for years to come that the people of Ontario deserve.

This bill is about supporting that plan. It’s a plan we ran on. It was in the Liberal platform in 2014, it was in the 2014 budget and it was in the 2015 budget. This bill supports that.

1510

First of all, a couple of points: One, in this bill, this will crystallize our commitment to ensure that all net proceeds of pre-qualifying assets mentioned in the 2014 budget and the 2015 budget will go to the Trillium Trust. There are no games here. This is about making sure that the net proceeds from these assets go to the infrastructure that we’ve committed to build. Those are hospitals; those are schools; that’s transit; those are roads. Those are the things that matter to that member in that riding and to all ridings across the province. That’s the first thing.

The second thing I would say is, when he talked about the FAO, I humbly suggest, Mr. Speaker, that he is not fully portraying what the FAO has said. The member is saying that the FAO said we will run a deficit. He did not say that. He outlined a number of risks and a number of scenarios. In one of those scenarios he said we would balance. It’s unfair to the people of Ontario to portray this as a report that says we will not balance.

He affirmed our deficit for next year and he affirmed that we always meet or exceed our targets. I would

humbly suggest that the member for Nipissing should present the full story to the people of Ontario.

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

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: That was truly amusing. I wonder how many people who are in this House today remember a number of years ago when the former Premier, Mr. McGuinty, said, “I will not raise your taxes.” Does anybody remember that? Guess what happened? We have had nothing but tax increases ever since that statement was made.

Interjection: More to come.

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: And there’s more to come, Mr. Speaker.

The \$2-billion smart meter scandal: That’s one I’d like to speak about. I have one up north at my place at Lion’s Head and it’s never worked. You know why it has never worked? Nobody figured out before it was put there that you can’t put it in a bush because the trees block out the signal. We read the thing all the time and send in that report to Hydro.

Interjection.

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: Yes, we’ll have to pay for that. It’s a \$2-billion scandal there.

I’d like to talk a little bit about the horse racing industry. This government cut that horse racing industry in half. It’s almost half the amount of people who are involved in it now. The smaller tracks are having real issues trying to make any money off the current program. The horse breeding industry took a terrific hit on this thing. They stopped breeding mares because it takes three to four years to get a foal to the track. These people don’t understand that, Speaker. They don’t understand the gestation period of a horse or how long it takes to train a horse. They think you can turn them on and off just at their own will. That’s not the way this thing works.

These agreements are supposed to have been in place a number of months ago and they’ve been dragging their feet and dragging their feet. Everything is coming in late, leaving an industry in limbo. I would suggest that when they say they are building up a horse racing industry, that’s false.

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

Mr. Taras Natyshak: I’m pleased to rise to comment on the hour lead that the member from Nipissing presented. He was very thoughtful in his review and his scrutiny of the bill. I agreed with the majority of his synopsis on it: a shell game, diversionary, and also, the numbers don’t add up. He hit on a lot of good stuff. I truly appreciate how nuanced he was on it.

This place is interesting, no doubt. This is a bizarre place. The member from Etobicoke Centre bemoaned the fact that the PC Party presented a platform plank in the last election that was to cut 100,000 jobs. They also touched, potentially, on the privatization of Hydro, not to the extent that the government was, but they presented a 50% sell-off of Ontario Hydro, not 60% like you’re doing. It is indeed interesting times when the Conserva-

tive Party—the PCs—are criticizing what, ostensibly, they would have done that you are now doing. You should actually be charged with plagiarism when it comes to the actions of your government.

To the member from Etobicoke–Lakeshore: Look, you campaigned against a Conservative candidate, but you are in fact doing the exact same thing. This is bizarre, Speaker. This is absolutely bizarre.

I'm happy to hear that the PCs have come around and identified and understand that selling off a major asset is not the way to go. We should maintain, protect and bolster our public services. It may be a little too late to find that, but indeed, it isn't too late to inform the government of how dire a mistake they are about to make.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): That concludes our time for questions and comments.

I return to the member from Nipissing for his reply.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: I appreciated the opportunity to listen to the members from London–Fanshawe, Etobicoke Centre, Perth–Wellington and Essex.

To the member from Etobicoke Centre: He suggested that there are no games being played here. I'll again read from the binder, on page 3, from section 7 of schedule 22, some more of the wiggle words that are in here. Under section 6, actually: "The prescribed amount of designated proceeds of disposition."

I asked at the briefing, "What does that mean?" Here's what the members of the Ministry of Finance said: "The government still retains discretion in how much the prescribed amount is." Also, the word that I put in quotes is "flexibility." What that means, again, Speaker, if you look down at number 7, is that, "Amounts not exceeding the balance in the Trillium Trust may be paid out of the Consolidated Revenue Fund."

So I asked a little bit more for an explanation of the proposed section 6, and what it means. They said, "It wouldn't mean all the revenue of the sale goes into the Trillium Trust." So when they say there are no games being played—these are all wiggle words, Speaker. They're trying to sound like it's definitive, but it's not. It is all about making sure that they can sell these assets and bring their budget deficit down.

Again, for the final time: This is to reimburse the crown for the construction or acquisition of infrastructure. It's to reimburse. We now know definitively that the sale of assets ostensibly will go into the Trillium Trust and into transit, and the money that was already there will come out and be put against the deficit. Refuting the FAO's report is not the answer.

I appreciate the opportunity to speak.

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

Ms. Catherine Fife: I'm pleased to be here and to provide some commentary on Bill 144, the Budget Measures Act, 2015.

I was contemplating how I was going to approach this bill, because this bill came very quickly. It just dropped down on us last Wednesday. We had a very quick statement and a very quick briefing.

I was reminiscing. It feels like that shift that happened when the first speech from the throne happened. I recall it feeling like a very different tone, a very different attitude, truly almost a sense of entitlement: "In this budget bill, you will deal with these measures. There will be very little debate on them." Clearly this government is not interested even in debating or defending their own bill; they only spoke to it for 16 minutes.

This is a trend that I hope the people of this province are paying attention to, because this is not the open and transparent government that we were promised. I actually went back—it really did feel very much like that throne speech, so I went back to it.

I remember that there was a whole section called "Building from the activist centre." Do you remember the "activist centre" language? It boasted to "open up government with increased transparency and more accountability," and the people of this province were going to be involved in every decision. There was going to be a "full and active participant in your communities and in your lives"—this is the government saying that they were going to do this. This is where, of course, they promised to lead from the activist centre, which promised to "engage all Ontarians as full partners," and there were some butterflies that flew off into the distance and blue skies.

The promise, of course, was to ask for feedback before decisions were made.

1520

Finally—and this is probably the best piece—the government promised to put evidence before ideology and choose partnership over partisanship.

I just raise this in the context of this budget bill because what we are seeing is almost completely the opposite of what we were promised and, I would suggest to you, what the people of this province thought they would be getting.

All of us, of course, have seen the fallout of Hydro One. Every single member in this House—I am certain of it—hears from constituents across this province. They are completely and utterly dismayed by the sell-off and privatization of Hydro One. They know very clearly that they did not hear this promise in the election.

I think it needs to be stated very clearly that this government is ignoring the power imbalance that Ontarians are feeling. Some 80% of Ontarians have said that they are not in support of this—188 municipalities. And yet, this government very clearly has blinders on and has presented a false choice to the people of this province: that if the sell-off of Hydro One does not happen, then you will not get infrastructure.

I'm going to be referencing the Financial Accountability Officer's report later.

All of this has to really do with schedule 22 of this bill. This is the little carrot that this government has led through to the people in saying—this is the false choice: "If we sell off Hydro One, you get infrastructure. If we don't sell Hydro One, no more infrastructure for the province of Ontario." It really is quite incredible to me.

Just to complete the thought on the speech from the throne from 2014: As it was being delivered—this is my recollection of it, just to be fair—it had a bit of a Shakespearean, theatrical feel to it at the time. Who knew that right in the middle of the activist centre, where everything was going to be fair, everything was going to be open, everything would be transparent, there would be a banker? It's not just any banker. He's just off that Premier's office—in my mind's eye, there's an emerald green curtain and there are some levers. Who would have thought that this Premier would have a banker using the Premier's office as the pulpit for privatization? Honestly, you couldn't even write this stuff. And what do we have as a result? We have one of the biggest and most harmful privatization plays in the history of this province.

What schedule 2 very clearly outlines is that the benefit to the people of this province—even if there was a kernel of benefit to this privatization play by this Premier, the people are not necessarily going to see any benefit from it.

I'll touch on the lack of consultation—because this is the pattern, this is the growing frustration, and this does not benefit any civic engagement in politics at all.

The concept of broadening ownership: What could be further from the truth, Mr. Speaker? Until the first 15% tranche was sold, up to that point, every Ontarian owned Hydro One. So you can't broaden it to more than the entire province. But what you can do is carve away little pieces of it for Bay Street. This concept of broadening ownership needs to be challenged, day in and day out, by everyone on this side of the House.

As the finance minister and the Premier carve off this very important revenue-generating public asset, we are dealing with the fallout in our own ridings. As it relates to this Budget Measures Act, we see very clearly that the people of this province are completely caught off guard by the sale of Hydro One and they do not believe that any funding—any profit, if you will—is going to flow through the consolidated revenues and then do a little bait and switch and end up in the Trillium Trust. The people of this province have serious trust issues with this concept because they see it as a shell game.

I remember just last spring, we had a town hall in Waterloo. A fellow got up to the microphone and he was shaking; he was shaking with anger. He was enraged because he knew that he got duped. He confessed that he had actually worked on the local Liberal candidate campaign. He challenged me and he said, “Where was this in the campaign literature?” I said, “It wasn't. It wasn't there. I never read it. You didn't see it because it wasn't there.” But I do think—and I will maintain to this day—that if it had been there, if this government had clearly campaigned on carving off Hydro One for privatization purposes, we would have had a very different election result.

We are not buying what this government is selling, and I'm happy to report that, actually, most Ontarians are not as well. This leads me to delve into schedule 22.

Before we actually go into the way the funding would flow through privatization, through the private shares

from the sell-off of Hydro One, we really need to take a step back and look at, how did we even get here? I think it's really important that people understand how serious these trust issues are. The members on the other side of the House will remember that before the election, Mr. Sousa and the Premier insisted that the government did not wish to privatize Hydro One or OPG, and that the advisory council had been told to “give preference to owning rather than selling core” interests. This is a matter of public record. I want to get it on the record here.

In April 2014, there was a speech to the Economic Club of Canada by Mr. Sousa, who said, “Continuing public ownership, however, remains a key priority”....

“There are ways to improve efficiency and optimize financial performance of any company, including OPG, Hydro One and the LCBO.... ‘We will not do what the previous PC government did ... with the fire sale of Highway 407.’”

These words come back to haunt you. On October 20, we asked the Premier why she thought public hydro belonged in the hands of private speculators. We put that question to the Premier. The Premier denied any plan to sell public hydro: Ed Clark “has said quite clearly that he doesn't believe that selling those assets is the right answer. He has said that.

“I believe that the leader of the third party is probably having a bit of a hard time framing the question because in fact Ed Clark has said he agrees that selling those assets is not the right thing to do.”

I'm glad that this is a matter of public record. I would have been happier to have had the government have the fortitude to stay and stand by these words. Unsatisfied, of course, our leader demanded the government seek the approval of the public before proceeding with the sale of public hydro, and then the Premier responded, saying in turn, “I'm laughing because the Minister of the Environment and Climate Change is replaying the attacks that were coming at us from the third party before the election....

“We have said we believe that these assets need to be in the hands of the people of Ontario. Ed Clark has agreed with that.”

Do you remember this? It's a matter of Hansard, so I'm just quoting it.

Then we go back again—because we have been trying to nail down this very slippery government on where privatization is going to happen and when it is not going to happen, and with, of course, the further promise of selling off more public assets. Once again, we cannot get an answer. We cannot pull an answer out of anyone from that side of the House. But that's when the Premier then said, “It must actually be very hard for the leader of the third party to ask these questions. She knows that we're not selling off the assets. She knows perfectly well that that was one of the parameters as Ed Clark went into this review. She knows that we are keeping these assets in public hands....” Well, I guess something desperate happened in that little curtained room off the Premier's

office that says—something must have happened, because these are their words. These are the Premier's words and her promise to the people of this province.

Once again, of course, on October 27—this is actually just over a year ago—Mr. Sousa replied, “We have made it clear that we are not going to sell off our assets.” On November 3, once again, the Premier said, “Let's just be clear: Despite what the NDP are saying, we asked the council to retain the government's long-term ownership of these assets. In fact, what Ed Clark said on, October 17: ‘We recommend keeping all three companies—OPG, Hydro One and the LCBO.’ So, in fact, there is not a sell-off of these companies,” as we would have them believe.

1530

This is a huge shift from where the Premier was, where Mr. Clark was, just a year ago. We have the proof in the Hansard, in this House, which demonstrates a very serious retraction of that position.

As we move forward with schedule 22—I think the critic for the PC Party actually shares some of the concerns that we have. There is definitely some crossover because we both received briefings from great ministry staff. Mine was this morning at 8:30, and I really want to commend the staff who work in those respective ministries and departments. They have their little bits and pieces that they really know very well. I just wanted to put that on the record. They were very helpful.

But just so that people understand fully that schedule 22 of Bill 144, the existing Trillium Trust is completely repealed with Bill 144 except for a few definitions in s. 1. Instead of recording—and this is the key part—all receipts and disbursements of public money to and from the trust, the accounts shall now track:

“1. Prescribed amounts of designated proceeds of disposition of qualifying assets.

“2. Prescribed amounts of prescribed non-cash benefits that are recognized by the crown in connection with dispositions of qualifying assets.

“3. All expenditures of public money under this act.”

So in other words, the Trillium Trust is no longer a bank account. The way that the government talks about the Trillium Trust is that it's this bucket of money. As you sell off Hydro One or bits and pieces of buildings that were once owned by the state, by the government, all that money goes right over into this little trust fund, and someday, in a far, faraway land, Kitchener–Waterloo will get a GO train that actually goes two ways.

That actually is not the case. The Trillium Trust is no longer a bank account recording the flow of money in and out of the trust. No money is actually ever deposited into or withdrawn from the Trillium Trust. It is now an accounting procedure for recording the designation of proceeds and non-cash benefits under the act, as well as for labelling certain infrastructure spending from the consolidated revenue as authorized expenditures under the act.

I'm pretty sure that if this government had done some consultation on at least this component, we would have seen some genuine concern and interest from stake-

holders who want to see infrastructure actually come to be realized, the infrastructure plan of this government to be realized. We're not quite sure what that plan is altogether because there are so many strings pulling these projects along, depending on the day of the week, that it is hard to find what the real priority is—which is why I stand in this House, as does the other member, from Kitchener–Conestoga, and we ask questions. The only way that we can see this government following through on priorities, or so-called priorities, is if we keep it on the front burner.

This morning, when I asked the question about the one-way GO trains that go in the morning and then the other one-way GO trains that come from Toronto to Kitchener in the afternoon, which I know you sometimes have to take as well—those are not pleasant experiences, nor is this a transit option, quite honestly, that meets the needs of commuters. The CEO from Thalmic Labs, I think, last week said it's absolutely ludicrous, in the economy of Ontario right now, to expect people to be on a train for over four hours, because productivity is impacted and productivity is also connected to connectivity. A two-hour slow train and the promise of two more slow trains in the morning and two more slow trains in the afternoon on the way back isn't really a 2015-16 option.

The longer this gets dragged on—people lose hope and they just get in their car. Like myself, they get in the car at 3:30 this morning, which I can tell you is not the best idea. I just want to put that on the record.

Back to the Trillium Trust: In addition to the existing assets that have been designated by regulation, the following assets will be designated under the Trillium Trust: the province's shares in Hydro One and Hydro One Brampton; the head office lands of the LCBO; the Ontario Power Generation head office building; and the OPG Lakeview lands. As with the existing Trillium Trust Act, the designated proceeds of disposition is equal to the gross proceeds minus the book value of the assets.

As far as I can tell, the idea is that when money is withdrawn from the consolidated revenue fund for infrastructure expenditures, the government may record, as an authorized expenditure, an amount up to the total balance in the trust.

The government is given broad regulatory authority to prescribe “anything that is permitted or required by this act to be prescribed, designated or done by regulation or in accordance with the regulations.”

The minister has a huge amount of power. It will never come to us. It will all be done by regulation, which, you must admit, Mr. Speaker, is of course the growing trend. This government would bring barely anything to this House if they could just get it done through regulation, which is ironic, because when they can actually do something by regulation which would be beneficial to constituents, they can't find the time of day to do it. So it does go back to this idea of priorities.

As I said, the government is given broad regulatory authority to prescribe “anything that is permitted or required by this act to be prescribed, designated or done

by regulation or in accordance with the regulations.” As with the existing act, there is still no guarantee that money from an asset sale would be dedicated to the trust. The finance critic for the PC Party also mentioned this.

Actually, I want to be really open and transparent: This came up in the briefing this morning. The government’s lawyer said, “No, no, it will, because it says ‘may.’ It says ‘may.’”

“May,” in their opinion, is permissive. Its language is permissive. We wanted to know: Why wouldn’t it say “shall”? If the true intention of these funds is to be invested in infrastructure and dedicated solely to infrastructure and transit investment, then why not make it completely clear?

I had this quote. Of course, I went right back to my office and did some research, but I don’t think I printed it off. It goes through the whole definition of “may” and “shall” and legalese. At the very heart of the matter, though, of course, is the trust issue, right? That remains the key issue.

As I said, there is still no guarantee that the amounts credited to the trust represent actual money. I think our energy critic has done an excellent job in addressing the non-cash revenue items. It is also now possible to increase the balance of the Trillium Trust simply by designating a gain on paper with respect to assets that the government already owns.

We will be addressing schedule 22 going forward. Hopefully, it gets to the finance committee very quickly and we get a chance to bring some of those concerns to the fore.

I think I was focused mostly on schedule 22 this weekend, when I was reviewing and studying the bill. My daughter was doing word problems. You remember the joy of word problems, or the joy of grade 9 math? My husband was working with her, because I don’t have the patience for word problems.

I was thinking about why we’re here. Aside from going through the entire history and the backtracking on what this government has said and who they’ve said it to, I was beginning to think about—the focus on transit right now is a little ironic. You’ll remember, Mr. Speaker, because you were here, that in 2010, when the Big Move was supposed to be moving, the Premier, who was then the Minister of Transportation, removed \$4 billion from that Big Move. That was supposed to be dedicated to build transit.

Of course, the Premier now lays claim to this activist centre, but it turns out that the activist at the centre now is a banker. So, this is a whole new world that we’re dealing with. This is not the progressive model—the open and transparent model—we heard about at length during the election.

1540

Certainly, we did fight for the Financial Accountability Officer to be a part of this Legislature. We fought at the time, and we still think this government needs an independent officer to look at financial decisions before they happen, which is why I think it was so very valuable to see that the Financial Accountability Officer, of his

own initiative, looked at the Hydro One sale—the privatization—and came back and sat us all down and said, “Listen, these are our concerns,” and I’m going to go through those concerns in a second.

After dealing with schedule 22 and raising some of our concerns, I think I want to spend a little time on schedule 12, the EllisDon bill. Actually, I want to stay on electricity, because I think electricity is pretty interesting—what we are seeing in the province.

Ms. Cindy Forster: I’ll take care of EllisDon.

Ms. Catherine Fife: You’ll do EllisDon? Yes, I know you will.

I think that, in schedule 3, you’ll see some pretty interesting analysis, and I suspect you will be hearing about schedule 3 quite a bit. This has to do with the Electricity Act, 1998. It has to do with residual stranded debt and stranded debt—all references to residual stranded debt and stranded debt are erased from the act. Wouldn’t it be nice if you could just take an eraser? There are several sections that are repealed, and the Minister of Finance is no longer required to determine or report the value of the residual stranded debt or stranded debt or announce when the residual stranded debt has been retired. Why would you actually put that in a bill? If you’re the finance minister, this doesn’t speak to accountability or transparency.

There is a really important thing, though, that stems out of this, coming from some pretty interesting criticism of this government. I don’t know if you know Tom Adams Energy. He does a bit of a blog, and he reported back on Bill 144 and rightly addresses some of the concerns around the OEFC. Really, the government has been silent on explaining the impact of the sale of Hydro One on the OEFC, the Ontario Electricity Financial Corp., until now. He goes into two themes, but what I really want to get on the record, because I completely agree with him, is that he goes on to say—I quote this from November 20, just last week:

“Bill 144, an omnibus budget measures act introduced November 18th, contains the first clues so far disclosed as to how the government intends to fill the hole it has created at OEFC with the sale of Hydro One.”

Actually not a lot of people have been talking about this.

“One section of Bill 144 repeals section 92(4) of the Electricity Act. That section of the Electricity Act would have redirected the flow of municipal taxes back to municipalities (and away from OEFC) once a portion of OEFC’s liabilities called the Residual Stranded Debt were paid off. What all of this means is that Wynne’s signature initiative to use the proceeds of the sale of Hydro One to build transit is to be achieved in part through the farcical finance of seizing revenue from another level of government. The amount of money is small in the scheme of things but it illustrates the government’s reliance on astrology and unicorn sightings to guide their electricity and transit plans.”

I couldn’t really get up and say this, but I just did because I’m quoting it directly from Tom Adams. He goes on to say:

“The financial flows underpinning Ontario’s electricity system, particularly OEFC, were designed from back in the days of Mike Harris as a shell game. The Libs,” I’m sorry, the Liberals, “have taken the shell game to ever greater levels of subterfuge. The government uses this shell game to sustain the provincial Auditor General’s continued confusion about the reality of the situation.”

He goes on because he thinks the Auditor General should be calling out the government on all of this, which is really hard to do because even when the Financial Accountability Officer does so, even when he releases a report—and the report is under all of those papers over there—the government: It’s like they’re reading a different document.

The Financial Accountability Officer has said very clearly that the revenue that they expect to get from the sell-off of Hydro One needs to be challenged. If you’ve been listening to what I said about schedule 22 and the Trillium Trust, and going way, way back—it feels like a long time to the throne speech and putting evidence over partisanship and research over ideology—you remember those days? If you forget for just a second that at the activist centre we have a banker, then you can look at the financial accountabilities report, because whatever money this government has said—this goes back to the false choice point: that they will somehow garner \$9 billion from selling Hydro One, which, up until two weeks ago, we all owned, and they’re going to broaden ownership to Bay Street but not the rest of us in this province. And there’s a long-term cost for this policy decision.

The FAO did his job and he came out and he said that instead of the promised \$4 billion for infrastructure, the financial accountability report shows that the sale will yield only \$1.4 billion to \$3.1 billion in actual spendable cash. As I pointed out last week at our opposition day motion, in 2013-14 this government failed to spend \$1.2 billion that they had budgeted. It was right there in the budget for transit, and they failed to spend it. Then in the 2013-14 budget they failed to spend almost \$400 million.

This is a government that—even when they come forward with an infrastructure plan, even when they have a budget line in the budget and the budget passes, they fail to spend that money wisely. They fail to invest it wisely. This, once again, goes back to the premise that this is completely a false choice: that if we don’t sell Hydro One, you get no infrastructure. It’s nonsensical. It makes no sense whatsoever.

When you follow the money, which you’ll understand is not the easiest thing to do at this place, and the Financial Accountability Officer challenges the projected profits from the sale of Hydro One, we need to remind people in this province that the \$1.4 billion to \$3.4 billion in actual cash, which would potentially go through consolidated revenues and potentially be moved into a piece of transit infrastructure investment, is roughly 1% of the government’s total \$130-billion 10-year infrastructure promise, or \$140 million per year, equal to

just 0.1%—one 10th of one per cent—of the province’s budget.

That’s why we have been challenging this concept—back to that throne speech—that this is going to be an inclusive government that is open and transparent and puts people first. The only people they are putting first with the sell-off Hydro One is that 1%. The 1% is going to do very fine. You can say it: Bay Street got to the Hydro One trough as fast as they could two weeks ago. It sold like hotcakes because they know that they’re going to make their money.

Conservation, which should be first and foremost—some of our policy directions around Hydro One—is going to fall right by the wayside because when it’s the shareholders who are driving a company, the shareholder’s interests trump a policy like conservation, because they’re not going to make as much money because we’re not going to be using as much energy.

Back to the FAO report: As a result of the various complicated accounting procedures, there will be non-cash proceeds in the form of equity revaluations that will bring the total credit to the Trillium Trust up to \$3.3 billion. These paper assets will have to be converted into cash in order to pay bills, perhaps by borrowing against paper assets.

This is, without a doubt, a bit of a shell game, and it makes it harder for us to track the money, especially the dedicated funds for infrastructure and transit, which this government says the sale of Hydro One is all about. That’s what they claim.

1550

Schedule 6 of Bill 144 looks to amend and dissolve the Ontario Economic Forecast Council. You’ll see that every budget—I have one here—is rubber-stamped by the Ontario Economic Forecast Council, but there are currently no appointees to the council. They have allowed this to wither and die on the vine, and I think it’s probably because the council just threw up their hands and gave up. Anyway, that’s my interpretation of it.

But fortunately, while it is discouraging that this council has been dissolved—and the Ministry of Finance now “anticipates continuing to consult with independent experts relating to macroeconomic forecasts and assumptions to be used in the preparation of the budget and fiscal plan”—they need only go right to the Financial Accountability Officer. His mandate is very clear. Yet when he came out with the report around Hydro One and the revenue projections from the sale of Hydro One, this government was not receptive to that research and to that economic modelling. In fact, they weren’t so cooperative either. They didn’t want to share the information, which leads us to this whole other gray area of commercial sensitivity or cabinet confidentiality around commercial ventures.

Hydro One, up to that point, was a public asset. It’s interesting that the government was so reluctant to make the case. So the Financial Accountability Officer comes to the table and says, “It’s my job to look into these issues. Can you please share this information with me?”

and they say, “No.” Now, if the business case was there, then I think they would be very forthcoming and very proud of it. Right?

So just to go back, the FAO was clear that the economic benefit of infrastructure investments was not going to be as the government projected. Now the government is going to come back, and they're going to say, “Well, he didn't take into account the economic benefit—period—of all infrastructure benefits.” I want to get this on the record. The FAO made it very clear that the economic benefit of infrastructure investments was irrelevant to his conclusion. His analysis assumed that the infrastructure would be built in any case. His analysis compared what would happen if the government financed by borrowing or by sale proceeds. This, actually, came up in our briefing as well. The FAO was very clear: Either way the infrastructure will be built. You're either going to borrow for it, or you're going to sell off a component of Hydro One for \$1.4 billion, which is about the amount of money you didn't spend on infrastructure in the last two budgets because you couldn't get your act together, or you were too focused on the politics of infrastructure.

Just to move forward, the FAO estimated that the province will lose net revenues of \$444 million to \$487 million a year by 2025. Now, I know the government isn't that focused on 2025. I know that they are very focused on 2017-18, but what a cost it's going to be. We already know that in the 2014 budget there was a 6% reduction in program spending in every ministry except for five. Some of those ministries, like health care for instance, were frozen, but that is a cut. In the last year's budget there was a 5.5% reduction in program spending in every ministry except for a few, like justice. Yet, those other ministries that are so-called safe—there's no safe area in the province of Ontario.

But the government is not doing some of the work that they should be doing, which is something that they could have included in this particular piece of legislation, to address taxable compliance, for instance. Tax compliance is a big issue in the province of Ontario, closing some of those corporate loopholes to actually generate some revenue and also addressing the way infrastructure is funded in the province of Ontario.

With that, I'd like to comment on the public-private partnerships that the Auditor General referenced in her report. There is no good reason why any government anywhere in Canada should be borrowing money at an almost 28% interest rate to fund infrastructure. This government could easily—I mean, they can't leave the country; some of them, I think, sometimes would like to. But they could get an interest rate of 2.8% to 3% for those infrastructure projects.

Just to give full attention and weight to the FAO's report as it relates, because I think the FAO is going to have—I hope his mandate will have some impact on the next budget that comes to the fore. Instead of shrinking the province's net debt by \$5 billion, the FAO said, the debt could actually increase by nearly \$300 million by

2025 as a result of the Hydro One sale, and perhaps as much as \$2.7 billion, if the government eliminated the debt retirement charge on non-residential electricity bills.

He says, “In years following the sale of 60 per cent of Hydro One, the province's budget balance would be worse than it would have been without the sale.” This is on the first page of the FAO report, and it certainly should warrant some attention by this government, for sure.

Now I think I should move on to schedule 12.

Section 12: This is like Groundhog Day, Mr. Speaker, this EllisDon bill, sneaking it into an omnibus bill—

Mr. Bill Walker: Without a shadow of a doubt.

Ms. Catherine Fife: Without a shadow of a doubt, obviously.

This new budget measures bill introduced last week contains a section that allows the government to impose a settlement on a years-long dispute between a giant construction firm, EllisDon, and a handful of trade unions.

This came up at the briefing as well. I asked the staff from the labour ministry: Was he not concerned about this being a precedent-setting move? Because this already came up to the floor of this Legislature, and members of the government did not support it.

Hon. Steven Del Duca: I did.

Ms. Catherine Fife: Here it is. All of the Liberal caucus voted against the bill on third reading, including yourself.

Hon. Steven Del Duca: No, I voted in favour.

Ms. Catherine Fife: But you weren't in the cabinet at the time.

Hon. Steven Del Duca: I voted in favour.

Ms. Catherine Fife: All of the Liberal caucus voted against the bill. Anyway, this was from the Queen's Park briefing—

Interjections.

Ms. Catherine Fife: I'll correct my record if I'm wrong. Yes, I will.

But it's really interesting, though, because during the minority government, you tried to bring in this bill to the Legislature. The member from Lambton-Kent also tried to bring it here.

This morning, one of the cabinet ministers said the floor of the Legislature is not a place to negotiate collective bargaining—and it is not. The fact of the matter—the real story—is that there is a court case that went as far as the Supreme Court, that was in favour of the trade unions, and the Ontario government has chosen to abrogate that decision.

This quote actually came from Eric Comartin, who is the general counsel of the Ontario Sheet Metal Workers' and Roofers' Conference. He said that this is really—I mean, there was mediation happening; it was ongoing. It really is unprecedented for a government to try to impose, especially in this manner.

This is an omnibus bill. I remember the days when the Liberal government had a lot to say about omnibus bills and how undemocratic they were and how they were just political tools to squeeze opposition party members.

There's a lot of concern about this. It should not be in a Budget Measures Act bill. I think all of us know it. I think I even heard the Conservatives say that it should be pulled out or seriously amended, but I can't quite be sure about that.

Mr. Speaker, just to reiterate, why did this Budget Measures Act come to us at this particular juncture? It seemed to me, when I first got a quick look at it, that it was really designed to make up for some of the things that the finance minister had failed to accomplish during the year. That includes everything from the integration of horse racing and gaming regulation under the Ministry of Finance. It redresses an old OLRB decision of EllisDon to the Sarnia working agreement. It further facilitates the sale of beer outside of the LCBO. I'll never forget the day that this government released that, "Six-packs over here. Here's the beer. Forget about the Hydro One sale." But, you know, for the most part it did work; people were talking more about beer than they were about Hydro One.

1600

Mr. Paul Miller: Beer is important.

Ms. Catherine Fife: I know, beer is important, especially craft brewers. Craft brewers are important.

Then, finally, it strengthens the penalties for the legal production of contraband tobacco and fundamentally changes the Trillium Trust, where Hydro One proceeds are supposed to go in order to fund infrastructure.

So what remains an interest for us is about following the money as it relates to this act. As I said, schedule 22 of the Trillium Trust is created as this dedicated fund, but doesn't really hold on to the intent of that because it says "it may." The EllisDon bill, this is like Groundhog Day for this piece of legislation. The electricity act, under schedule 3—I need to keep coming back to this false choice of how the Hydro One privatization and sell-off and carving off of that important public asset and revenue-driving agency affects how infrastructure is funded in the province of Ontario.

Just to go back to that word problem, and listening to my daughter try to figure that out: We have this sort of dichotomy here in the province of Ontario, where we have these promises of infrastructure and transit, we have reannouncements of announcements on this file, and then we have the reality of standing up in this House and asking the questions as to when the money is going to flow and when the action is going to happen.

I keep thinking about—of course, the Kitchener-Waterloo GO train is on my mind. I raised it this morning. I didn't get much of an answer, but I'll just keep trying.

Hon. Steven Del Duca: That was a great answer.

Ms. Catherine Fife: Oh, no, it was a great answer in your world—that's the unicorn world that we were talking about earlier. I just want to pose a little question to you, a word question: Train A is travelling 70 kilometres per hour and it leaves Toronto heading towards Kitchener, 110 kilometres away. At the same time, train B, travelling 60 kilometres an hour, leaves Kitchener heading toward Toronto. When do the trains meet? How

far from each city do they meet? Obviously, in this instance, Mr. Speaker, it's a trick question, I'm afraid: GO trains can't travel to and from Kitchener and Toronto at the same time. There is no two-way, all-day GO train service, and there doesn't seem to be a timeline to complete this promise from the government either.

But the point remains: Word problems can certainly help us illustrate some of the long history of bait and switch in the short history of the Wynne government. That's what I was getting at when I went through the entire history of what this government has said about how they feel about public assets, how they value public assets, but then they turn around and they bury them in an omnibus bill or say that they campaigned on the sell-off of Hydro One when, if you talk to any individual who campaigned in 2014, there was no clear delineation in any of that campaign literature that said that Hydro One would be sold off to fund infrastructure.

I will maintain that that is, indeed, a false choice. You cannot realistically say to the people of this province that if we don't support the sell-off of Hydro One, we get no infrastructure. Your real plan is just to address this ongoing deficit which you created. That really is so disrespectful to the people of this province. You certainly didn't take it to the people, and yet you ridicule the PC Party for campaigning on killing 100,000 jobs. It's the same thing.

You remember Don Drummond also said that. Don Drummond was on The Agenda just prior to the election. He's very clearly on the record as saying, "They can criticize the PC caucus all they want; the 6% program spending cuts in the 2014 budget, the 5.5% program spending cuts in the 2015—those equate to cuts to those services. Those are public services, those are public jobs that are getting cut by this government." We concur with Don Drummond: At the end of this term, by 2017-18, this government will be able to boast that they have the lowest program public service spending in the country. They will have outpaced Mike Harris like you would not believe.

In fact, Mike Harris didn't even have 6% program spending cuts in his budgets, and they burned him in effigy on the front lawn of this Legislature. I know, because I was there.

Hon. Steven Del Duca: What did Frances Lankin say about that?

Ms. Catherine Fife: Obviously the government doesn't like being held to account. They really don't. I've gone through the entire history. It's a matter of Hansard and it's a matter of public record.

It's so funny that you just mentioned—one of the members from across the way just mentioned Frances Lankin. I'll just finalize this by saying that we did table a motion calling for a referendum before selling public assets like Hydro One. If you were really ruling from the activist centre, you would have considered a referendum.

In his reply to the motion, Glen Murray—I'm sorry, the minister—said, "You know, Mr. Speaker, the New Democrats can be so endearing." This is so condescend-

ing. “For some reason, in her desperate need to run against herself for leader of her own party, the NDP seems to lack the very intellectual integrity they accuse everyone else of not having. It’s fascinating....”

“Let me just quote the chair of a process that’s still going on, that if the third party wanted to influence, they certainly could if they weren’t afraid to take a position on anything. Mr. Clark, along with Ms. Ecker and Ms. Lankin, says, ‘We recommend keeping all three companies—OPG, Hydro One and the LCBO’”—in the public domain. “He said that just a couple of days ago.”

So Frances Lankin, to your point, weighed in on this, and I’m glad that she did. But as was said in Hamlet, I think you protest too much on this point, because we do have the record. We have the Hansard. We have the public record.

This government started down a path. Mr. Clark came on board and clearly made the case that you were in such financial disarray as a government that you would never meet your deficit reduction deadline, and you wouldn’t reach it because you had seriously dug such a serious hole for the province of Ontario.

There’s a lot to say about this Budget Measures Act. I’ve spoken for 51 or 52 minutes on it. You spoke for 16 minutes on it. I don’t think that that has ever happened, that a government doesn’t speak fully to a piece of legislation that they are bringing to the floor of this Legislature—16 minutes.

The criticism is coming from all sides, though, from everywhere. That was not the promise in that throne speech, just to bookend it. There was the promise not to fall into that partisan trap and to put evidence over ideology. If this government was truly committed to that, then they would take that FAO report and take a serious step back on the sale of Hydro One.

I’ll have to quote Tom Adams again, from Ideas for a Smarter Grid. Actually, Hydro One CEO Anthony Haines is totally complimenting this government on this sort of “sell here, reinvest there; put it under this shell, slide it under this shell; a little bit through consolidated revenues, not really in the Trillium Trust, but leave it up to regulation; and then the finance minister gets to call it whatever he wants.” That’s essentially what this budget act actually does.

But of course, this sort of criticism comes from Mr. Haines, who has been a leading proponent for several of the government’s most mismanaged, wasteful energy initiatives, including smart meters, conservation programs and energy storage, so keeping good company right there.

1610

When we brought our opposition day motions to this floor last week, I made it really clear that we were doing so on behalf of the people of this province. The people of this province deserve to have a say. They didn’t get an opportunity to do so during the election, because they didn’t know that this government was going to sell off Hydro One. As I pointed out, and as the Financial Accountability Officer has pointed out, Hydro One is not

a deal that is going to benefit the people of this province. In fact, there are some long-term negative impacts on revenues that come into this province the more this province goes down this road. In the long run, there will actually be an increased deficit—the Financial Accountability Officer has done the economic modelling—every year except after 2017-18, when there will be a miracle and some balance will happen.

I’m waiting to hear the fall economic statement later this week, because as I pointed out already, as did the FAO, this government has greatly exaggerated the revenues they are supposed to be bringing in because they didn’t use appropriate nominal GDP levels. So we see future cuts coming; in fact, even stronger cuts than we saw in the 2014 budget and the 2015 budget. This government seems complacent, or amenable, to the idea of cutting programs that actually affect the most vulnerable people in this province.

Just this weekend, I was at a Home of Their Own conference; I was speaking there. Just as a small example of this, back in 2006 the government went to these families who have severely disabled children and said, “You know what? We’re going to get out of the group home business. We would really like you to work together, and we’ll support you in that.” That was in 2006. So three parents I have been working with in Kitchener-Waterloo for three years are on the hook right now. They bought a house and provided some services, but they’re not receiving any support from the government, except for two days a month. They bought the house and do the maintenance, and the government is not willing to come to—this family didn’t even qualify for some pilot money, even though the government told them to go out and buy this house and work collaboratively together. You know, one day they’re not going to be able to take care of their severely disabled children. One day the state is going to have to take care of them instead. Why not be proactive? That should be a priority that this government is focused on.

That’s sort of like this walking contradiction we are seeing here in this Legislature. With great urgency and at the last minute, we get a budget bill that reintroduces the EllisDon bill, compromises collective bargaining in the province of Ontario and provides no clarity, really, around the Trillium Trust and this false choice of selling Hydro One: If you sell Hydro One, you get infrastructure; if you don’t sell Hydro One, you get no infrastructure. This makes no sense, especially when you follow the money.

With that, as always, I think we are going to be caucusing this bill, but there are clearly pieces in this legislation that were meant to put us in a corner, which doesn’t speak to that original intent from that activist centre, where there is a banker now, of working collaboratively with the other parties and trying to strengthen this province, to build this province up by not tearing it down and not hurting the most vulnerable people in the province.

With that, I will leave it there. Thank you very much.

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

Ms. Sophie Kiwala: It's a real pleasure for me to speak today on Bill 144, the Budget Measures Act.

In response to the member from Waterloo, I just wanted to point out that the comment she made that it wasn't in the campaign literature—what was in the campaign literature was that we were going to review our assets. The electorate supported our leadership and our ability to keep the economy moving, and we made a commitment to do that. We are standing by the commitment, and Ontarians expect that we are going to make those necessary investments in infrastructure and transportation.

I would also like to point out that the budget bill is supporting infrastructure funding in the region of Waterloo. I've been having a look at some of the figures that we're looking at right now. As has been mentioned many times, this is the largest infrastructure investment in Ontario: \$130 billion in 10 years. In the Waterloo region, we have been looking at an Infrastructure Ontario loan program, formerly the OSIFA, \$38,521,300; Municipal Infrastructure Investment Initiative, \$7,000,300; and Investing in Ontario, \$22,596,000. I know that the member from Waterloo must be appreciative of these investments in her riding.

The changes are necessary, Mr. Speaker, and we continue to support and implement our plan for Ontario. The legislation will help grow our economy and keep our communities moving.

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

Mr. Bill Walker: It's a pleasure to speak to my colleague from Kitchener–Waterloo. She echoed a number of comments made by my colleague from Nipissing, Vic Fedeli.

I think a lot of the concern I've had in reading through the 200 pages—again, it was tabled just over the weekend—is the wiggle room that the Liberals have built into, certainly, the Trillium Trust and the Electricity Act. Both of those should have been money that was utilized from the sale of anything, such as the fire sale of Hydro One, to go against that deficit so we don't saddle our pages and our youth any more than this government already has. I think it was alluded to that the Deputy Premier actually has committed and commented on W5 that the Liberal government is out of money, so this truly is a fire sale. It really concerns me. That is money that should be paying down the debt so there's more money to actually spend on our programs for our less fortunate, our needy, our health care, our Community Living groups, those types of groups, as opposed to putting money into a budget that will make the Liberal books look better for a very short term.

The Financial Accountability Officer has come out already and said that this sale is going to be a couple of years of short-term gain but there's going to be long-term pain. We're going to lose that \$700-million revenue stream in perpetuity, Mr. Speaker.

The member from Etobicoke Centre, when he stood a little while ago, talked about some cuts. I want to ask that member how he believes that the 354 cuts that have already been made in the riding of Nipissing alone, or the 50 educational assistants cut in my riding of Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound, are not deemed to be cuts, and how they're going to balance the budget in 2018 when they're adding to that deficit on an annual basis moving forward—yet they're miraculously going to balance the budget in 2018. I want him to assure me there won't be one single cut, Mr. Speaker, because that's what he's purporting out there: that there will be no cuts under this government. We know it's not true; we know it's not reality.

This, again, is another case of the Liberals utilizing legislation for their own gain as opposed to what's best for the people of Ontario.

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

Mr. Paul Miller: Speaker, I'd just like to say that we keep hearing this number, \$4 billion, about the sale of Hydro and what it's going to generate. Some critics have said it's more like \$1.5 billion. Regardless, I've got an answer for everybody that would have solved everybody's problems. It's very simple. We wouldn't even be doing this Budget Measures Act if they would have done this. We did have a few scandals: Ornge, eHealth, gas plants, MaRS, you name it. The total of those scandals came to \$3.2 billion. There's a nice chunk of that \$4 billion they've got to raise for revenue for infrastructure.

1620

Then, Speaker, I've got another suggestion. If this government had done a forensic audit of every ministry that's under their jurisdiction, you probably could have saved hundreds of millions of dollars more of waste. None of this would have been taking place; we wouldn't have had this act; we wouldn't have had to do anything if we hadn't wasted billions of dollars. You wouldn't have had to have a sale of hydro. We still could have had 100% of hydro, and done the infrastructure for the next 10 years, in the savings alone.

It doesn't take a financial genius to figure out that if you have a one-time sale at \$4 billion and you're giving up \$600 million or \$700 million a year in profit, it doesn't take too long to make up that \$4 billion in money that you're getting from the hydro revenue. In probably four or five years, you'd have it all back. But, no, we're going to give it up for the next 50 or 100 years. Whoever out there bought the shares is going to make a lot of money off the backs of the taxpayers of Ontario—a bad deal; bad management by this government for the last years.

A financial nightmare is on the way, and believe me, I'm sure you haven't heard it here first, but you will continue to hear it.

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

Mr. Grant Crack: I'm very pleased to be able to stand today and make some comments regarding Bill 144, the Budget Measures Act.

Bill 144 does amend a number of acts, but I want to comment on what I believe is the recurring theme that we're continually hearing from the opposition and the third party. I understand that their role is to just oppose—that's what they do—but this initiative of broadening the ownership of Hydro One is the right thing to do.

In my riding and in this House, we hear constantly, "What are you, as a government, going to do about hydro rates?" I've had constituents come, and I speak to them on a regular basis.

We're acting on this, and we're broadening the ownership of Hydro One because, I believe, a private sector influence will certainly result in a better-run company over the long term. They're going to need to find the efficiencies required to operate, and they're also going to have to look at possibly diversifying in the future.

Of course, we all know that our commitment is to grow the economy through infrastructure investments. But it's important to talk about what this actually is about. This is about transmission and distribution. This is not about generation. This is not about any other charges on your hydro bill. It's transmission and distribution, which is a certain percentage.

When I explain to people that we have \$15 billion in the value of transmission and distribution just sitting there—and, yes, we've put billions of dollars of upgrades into the system across the province over the last number of years. So you have an asset, and I think the responsible thing to do when you have an asset of that value is, you maximize that asset and you bring the returns back to the people of Ontario.

When we hear some of the members talk about the people of Ontario owning Hydro One in its entirety, we're going to continue to own 40% of a better-run company, a more efficiently run company, a more diversified company. I've got confidence in that.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): That includes our questions and comments. I'll return to the member for Kitchener–Waterloo for her response.

Ms. Catherine Fife: Thanks to the members from Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound, Kingston and the Islands, Hamilton East–Stoney Creek and Glengarry–Prescott–Russell.

It's interesting. The member from Kingston and the Islands asked, do I not value these investments? I will value them when they happen. That's the issue.

On the record, we have promises from 2011 just on the GO train. We have one-way GO trains in the morning and we have one-way GO trains in the afternoon, but that was not the promise. The promise is on the record by the former Minister of Transportation that two-way, all-day GO would happen in five years. Electrification and getting rid of diesel trains would happen in 10 years. That is what the people of Kitchener–Waterloo were told. So will I value it? Is it my job to stand up and try to hold the government to account each and every day on these promises? Of course.

Was I happy that the member from Kitchener Centre this weekend said, "You're right: These trains need to be

faster"? They do, because a two-hour-and-10-minute one-way commute from Kitchener–Waterloo to Toronto is unacceptable. It is a productivity issue.

I think that of those 30 kilometres worth of track that are still up for debate, CN won't even let this government go onto the property, do the evaluation and measure what needs to happen, because otherwise—two more slow trains doesn't do the trick. Surely we can agree on that, Mr. Speaker.

So this budget bill, though—the Kool-Aid that some folks are drinking on the sell-off of Hydro One and the broadening of the ownership is absolutely outrageous. I can tell you that I don't think it's going to benefit the infrastructure bottom line in this province one iota. We're not buying what you are selling.

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

Mr. Bob Delaney: Speaker, at the outset, I would like to say that I'll be sharing my time with the members from Vaughan and Burlington.

Twice each year, generally in the spring and the fall, governments all across Canada will do a bill that cleans up some out-of-date laws, amends laws where circumstances have changed and introduces new statutes whose impact is not particularly broad in scope. For us in western Mississauga, one of those changes means that at Sobey's in Churchill Meadows, at Metro in Meadowvale and Lisgar and at Longo's in Meadowvale, we'll now be able to buy beer in the stores if they so apply, just as they can now sell Ontario VQA wine in their stores.

Now, earlier this year, a report to the province asked why stores could sell wine but not beer. Many of us have visited other states and provinces, other countries, other jurisdictions, where society, as we knew it, had not collapsed with the broadening of the distribution of wine and beer in retail outlets.

The bill also puts in place measures that will affect our electricity bills, and I'd like to talk about that in a little bit of detail. Back in 1999, the former Conservative government in Ontario dismantled the old Ontario Hydro to look at selling the corporation. In doing so, they set up Hydro One to own the towers, the wires, the substations and some of Ontario's local distribution. Hydro One now does about 24% of the local distribution in the province of Ontario.

That outgoing PC government also established Ontario Power Generation, which owned the dams and the Darlington and Pickering nuclear stations, and other generation facilities. As well, regulation exists under the Ontario Energy Board, and planning and system management have since been consolidated under the Independent Electric System Operator.

That former Ontario PC government took some \$19.8 billion of Ontario Hydro debt and added an additional \$1 billion of debt it incurred buying spot power on the US market for as much as \$2.83 per kilowatt hour and then reselling it for 4.3 cents per kilowatt hour in Ontario in the days when the outgoing PC government was also hauling emergency diesel generators into Ontario cities in

the event that the electrical system collapsed altogether. By the way, the electrical system did collapse altogether in August 2003.

For the past decade, Ontarians have rebuilt our province's transmission network and power generation plants at the same time as Ontario got out of coal-fired power generation. By comparison, our US neighbours have continued to run their wires, their nuclear reactors, their power dams and their coal plants into the ground.

Ontario has already taken a lot of the pain. The six dozen or so largest US utilities have not. They have yet to step up and look at a future rushing toward US residences and businesses, just like an express freight. In essence, Ontario has bought tomorrow's power system at yesterday's prices, financing it all at near-zero interest rates. Across the border, Americans will need to open their wallets to buy today's power system at tomorrow's prices, financing it all at interest rates that have nowhere to go but up.

Ontario's power rates are already lower than or competitive with rates in the fast-growing jurisdictions, such as the US eastern seaboard, the Great Lakes basin, the southwest or California. In those jurisdictions, just as here, the local utilities are turning off coal and moving toward a blend of natural gas, wind and solar, just like we did here, all the while looking at upgrading their wires and refurbishing their dams and their nuclear reactors—10 years behind Ontario.

1630

Now, after the end of this year, 2015, Ontarians can look forward to seeing the debt retirement charge cut off of their bill. What this means is that when you look at your bill and you see that one little line that says, "Debt retirement charge," after the end of this year—gone. At the same time, the Ontario Clean Energy Benefit, which took 10% off of your electricity bill, is going to be replaced with an income-tested means called the Ontario Electricity Support Program. It will benefit those who need assistance the most by flowing the funds through the Ontario Trillium Benefit along with your sales tax credit, your seniors' property tax credit and, in the north, your Ontario Northern Energy Tax Credit.

This bill will, if passed, mean that commercial, industrial and non-residential electricity users would stop paying the debt retirement charge nine months earlier than previously estimated and also give them time to make proper investment decisions. This would save a typical large industrial company about 7% on their energy bills; it would save a northern industrial company more than 8% and a small business about 4% on their electricity bills.

Speaker, this is a measure that, all by itself, brings with it a significant benefit to the province. While this is a bill with an awful lot of other little tweaks and measures, these energy benefits, all by themselves, are going to make a major difference here, and that's one solid reason that for those of us in western Mississauga, in our neighbourhoods of Lisgar, Meadowvale and Streetsville, this is a bill that we need and we should have

passed and enacted in between now and when the House rises for Christmas.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Minister of Transportation.

Hon. Steven Del Duca: I want to begin by thanking our colleague the member from Mississauga—Streetsville for adding his voice in support of Bill 144, the important Budget Measures Act. As he mentioned, he and I are both sharing our time with the wonderful member from Burlington who will be speaking in just a moment.

I'm delighted to have the opportunity to speak today, here in my place, with respect to Bill 144. I say that not just as the Minister of Transportation, but, of course, also as someone who represents the community of Vaughan here in the Legislature, which, like many of the other communities from the greater Toronto and Hamilton area and beyond, is a fast-growing part of this province that has a wide variety of very pressing infrastructure needs.

This bill does speak to the importance of making sure that we continue to get it right with respect to investing, over not just the next year or decade, but, frankly, even beyond that point in time, the billions of dollars that are required for communities here in the greater Toronto and Hamilton area, like Vaughan, like Burlington, like Mississauga and others, and then, of course, Speaker, beyond the GTHA. We're also talking about communities from the north to the southwest to the east: I think of Kitchener-Waterloo; I think, of course, of Ottawa; I think of Thunder Bay; I think of Sarnia—every community in this province, 444 municipalities. I don't believe anybody here would disagree that in each of those communities, there is a significant and pressing need for infrastructure investments that range all the way from enhancing and building new public transit to extending and expanding roads and highways and improving bridges.

A very, very key and fundamental part not only of our government's agenda but of this specific legislation deals with the mechanisms that will help support the increased and expanded investments that are required, the additional resources that have to be deployed to make sure that we continue to see our quality of life across the province improved, but also to make sure that our economy continues to be prosperous.

Now, over the last number of days, we on this side of the Legislature—and unfortunately for those people watching at home, the opposition from both the Conservative and NDP caucuses—have had the chance to speak on issues relating to not only this bill, but our government's ambitious determination to move forward with investing in infrastructure. We've heard all kinds of wild and crazy accusations flowing from members on that side of the Legislature. It's unfortunate, because in each of their cases, for the most part, as I look at them on a day-after-day basis, I know the extent to which their communities, the communities they have been charged with representing here in this chamber, need additional support for infrastructure.

Of course, as opposition parties are often willing to do, they want to pick apart certain details. They want to

go after the finer minutiae in our plan. But what they neglect to tell people in this chamber, what they certainly neglect to tell media and what they neglect to tell people in their own communities is exactly how they would come forward and make the infrastructure investments that are required to improve our collective quality of life and to strengthen our province's economy.

It's unfortunate because for too long, I think, members of both the Conservative caucus and the NDP caucus have been far too focused on that level of granular detail, as opposed to saying, "Look, we tend to disagree, as we are required to do from time to time as opposition, but here is our alternative plan," and it's a plan that actually can be backed up with facts. It's a plan that can give people in communities as diverse as Kitchener–Waterloo and Hamilton, folks from Sudbury, folks from London—right across this province—some hope, some sense that the Conservatives and the NDP have a plan to build the province up.

Yet day after day, hour after hour, in debate after debate, opposition motions, questions asked in question period, and debate here on Bill 144, what the opposition does time and time again is make it clear that they have no plan, or at least that they have no plan for which the numbers add up.

It's all fine and dandy for members like the NDP finance critic, the member from Kitchener, to stand in their place and talk about whether or not we've delivered on a promise that had a 10-year horizon, about whether or not, in the first 14, 15 or 16 months of our mandate, we delivered on a promise that we always said would take a certain period of time.

She also stands in her place, among many others on that side of the House—in fact, like many others on both sides of the House—and says, "Show us proof. Show us proof, beyond commitments and media releases, that you're serious about this plan."

Speaker, I don't know how much clearer we could be with respect to our plan and demonstrating tangible results of our plan. I've said this before, in my place, in this House: Right across the province of Ontario, highways continue to be expanded and extended. Bridges and interchanges continue to be enhanced and reinvigorated.

Here in the greater Toronto and Hamilton area, it's impossible to miss. If you spend any time in the GTHA, or here in the city of Toronto, it's impossible to miss the Eglinton Crosstown LRT: 19 kilometres; 25 stops; three connections to GO stations, or at least to GO transit; multiple connections to the subway here in Toronto. It's a \$9.1-billion project that's currently being constructed, the single largest public transit project in Ontario history. Yet the members of both the NDP and the Conservative parties say, "Show us proof that it's real. Show us proof that you're actually building."

This list goes on. Right now, we are currently double-tracking, for example, the Barrie corridor of GO south of Rutherford station, from York University to Rutherford—another example of something that's physically required in order for us to deliver on two-way, all-day GO service.

So I don't know. I mean, it's really unclear to me. It's interesting, because the NDP talks about having a referendum on certain issues. In the last election campaign—which didn't take place four years ago or 10 years ago; it took place about 18 or 19 months ago—the people of Ontario had a chance to hold up to the light all three parties' plans for building the province up—all three of them. They had a chance to look at the Conservative plan. They had a chance to look at the NDP plan, such that it was. They had a chance to look at that plan. Of course, they had a chance to consider the plan that Kathleen Wynne and the Ontario Liberals put forward, with specific details included for transit—

Interjection.

Hon. Steven Del Duca: It's fascinating for me to listen in particular to a member from Hamilton. Hamilton East–Stoney Creek, I believe, is the name of the riding. That member himself knows full well that we are extending GO service not just to Hamilton but specifically to Stoney Creek, to a new station that will be built in his riding. I don't know, Speaker.

1640

At the same time, the leader of the NDP stands in her place—I know I sound like a broken record, and I apologize for that to those members. But day after day, the leader of the NDP, Andrea Horwath, stands up and says, "You shouldn't be doing this." What she doesn't tell the people in her own caucus and in her own party, the rank and file of the NDP in communities all across the province of Ontario—she doesn't come forward and say, "Here's the project in your community that I wouldn't fund. Here's the project that I wouldn't build. Here's the project that I'd cancel."

I would expect that, as leader of her party, someone who aspires, I can only imagine, to one day be the Premier of Ontario, to one day have that opportunity—I believe there's a responsibility that flows to the leader of the NDP and to the members of her caucus from Kitchener, from London, from Hamilton, from all over the province, to level with the people here in this chamber: "We don't want to build infrastructure the way the Liberals are doing it. Therefore, we don't plan to build it. Here's what we're going to cancel." They won't say it; they should. It's unfortunate.

We're going to continue to build this province up. I look forward to my colleague from Burlington continuing with this debate this afternoon.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I now recognize the member for Burlington.

Ms. Eleanor McMahon: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's an absolute pleasure to stand in my place today on behalf of the community of Burlington and join my colleague from Mississauga–Streetsville and, of course, the always eloquent Minister of Transportation.

It's indeed my honour to speak to Bill 144, the Budget Measures Act. Our government is committed to building Ontario up. This is a commitment that we have repeatedly made to the people of Ontario by our words and by our actions in communities across our province and right here in this chamber.

Bill 144 implements necessary changes in order to continue our government's economic plan, including investing in the individuals in our communities, helping them to develop their skills, and making the largest investments in public infrastructure in Ontario, of which the Minister of Transportation spoke so eloquently a moment ago: over \$130 billion over the next decade, something that is greatly needed across our province, something that leading economists and business organizations have told us is critically important. Indeed, I've often heard the Minister of Transportation say—he said it when he came to my riding—that we are simultaneously playing catch-up and keep-up. I know that the people in Burlington appreciate these investments in transit infrastructure in particular. The day after our last budget, in fact, our mayor came to a breakfast and extolled the virtues of these investments. Our businesses have done so locally, and our citizens talk to me about it all the time. They're enormously grateful. Finally, we're strengthening retirement security so that Ontario's young people can live through their golden years with some financial stability because no one wants a generation of Ontarians retiring in poverty.

The proposed amendments to the Trillium Trust Act will ensure that net revenue gains from the sale of assets, like the broadened ownership of Hydro One, will be invested in priority infrastructure projects. These record investment levels have supported improved GO transit service. Major projects are under way—the regional express rail, the Lakeshore West and East corridors, and all-day, two-way 15-minute GO service between my community on the one end and Oshawa on the other; just extraordinary. Enhanced regional mobility will also include the Dundas rapid transit project linking Toronto, Mississauga, Oakville and my community of Burlington. Ongoing planning and design work will continue for this project, which is a big part of the next wave of Metro-linx's Big Move plan.

Of course, all citizens have a right to live in walk- and bicycle-friendly communities. Something of which I'm enormously proud is that our government is funding active transportation investments in communities right across this province because cycling and walking are incredibly important.

Interjection.

Ms. Eleanor McMahon: That's right. It's critical not just to our liveability but, as my colleague mentions, to our health and well-being, to attracting jobs and investment to my community and to really giving our seniors the kind of robust transit and walking infrastructure that they need and deserve as they get older.

We are planning for the future beyond the next election cycle because that's leadership. I know that the people of Ontario understand this. They know that we need to do something for the future, that we need to do something for our young workforce of today to, again, ensure that they can retire not in poverty but in dignity. In fact, when the minister came to Burlington, we had a round table with businesses. Many of them said, "Wow,

we're getting to understand more and more every day the importance of the ORPP." They recognize that either we and they invest now in our population and in our citizens in the form of the ORPP or pay down the road when we have a whole generation of retirees with no retirement savings.

As we move into phase 2 of our mandate, our government is continuing to build Ontario up by making investments that create jobs, expand opportunity and secure prosperity for the people in Burlington and, indeed, right across our province. We recognize that infrastructure investments in the GTHA and beyond are critical, as I mentioned, not just to improving the quality of people's lives but to our business and our job creation.

A final point, if I may, Speaker, is something of which I'm terribly proud, and that's the investment in our Joseph Brant Hospital. We will have a brand new hospital by 2018 because of the investments that our government is making in the health and wellbeing of our citizens, particularly those in Burlington. This is creating jobs already and it will continue to attract jobs and investment to our community, and I'm enormously proud of that.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for this opportunity.

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

Mr. Jeff Yurek: I'm glad to stand up and give two-minute comments on what we just heard from the government side. I think it's great that they spoke for, basically, as long as their initial one-hour debate. It started with around 16 minutes, I think, as the first hour, followed by a 20-minute round afterwards. The concern is how quickly they are going to push this omnibus bill through the Legislature and probably time-allocate the debate and quickly put it through committee and bring it back and pass. That's quite a concern.

It's interesting. When the government wants things done they do it quickly. However, we're still waiting for our fall economic statement, which I believe is a few weeks behind. It would be nice to see where our finances are, because the Financial Accountability Officer just reported last week that it's not looking like this government is going to reach their balance by 2017-18, and particularly not from selling Hydro One. It might give them a little bump, but in the long term Ontario is going to be worse off.

I was glad to hear the Minister of Transportation speaking today about all the infrastructure projects. He's clearly listening to the farmers in my area who are continuing to talk about this Glanworth bridge going forward, the underpass which the ministry consultants want to take out. They talk about how strong infrastructure investment is in this province but I think infrastructure investment also includes rural Ontario and the farmers. They need their necessary infrastructure—their bridges, their roads—aside from the major arteries of our local communities, because the farm equipment is so large nowadays and the trucks on and off the road are so numerous.

The agricultural sector, I think, is our number one industry in this province. It's consistent, it provides plenty of jobs and it helps local, small, rural communities stay afloat. This government needs to ensure that when they're making decisions out of Toronto, that the local needs are met.

A group of farmers and I are fighting to stop this government from getting rid of a major underpass for Highway 401 for our farmers. We hope the government is going to listen. We have slowed them down in the decision-making and we hope that in the next little while we'll hear some good news that they are supporting rural Ontario and the agricultural community.

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

Ms. Catherine Fife: I'm just going to go right to the point from the Minister of Transportation. He says that we're just opposing. We're just trying to get this government to follow through on what they said. Perhaps it's unfair to say that the former Minister of Transportation—you know, I should hold this Minister of Transportation to account for what Mr. Murray had said. He did say, for the record, on May 26, 2014, when speaking with CBC Radio, that Kitchener will see "GO train service that runs every 15 minutes between Waterloo region and Toronto ... within five years." This was a direct quote. This was said just prior to the election. And then there was also the environmental assessment and the scandal associated with that, and then the bullet train and what have you.

But what I really want to say, though, is that I share the concerns of the member from Kitchener Centre when she says that that train is not fast enough, because adding slow trains doesn't solve the issue. What the Minister of Transportation did not address is the false choice that Bill 144 puts before us. As an omnibus budget measures act, it contains, really, the first clues so far disclosed as to how the government intends to fill the hole it has created with the OEFC.

This is actually coming from Tom Adams's blog:

"What all of this means," he goes on to say, "is that [the Premier's] signature initiative to use the proceeds of the sale of Hydro One to build transit is to be achieved in part through the farcical finance of seizing revenue from another level of government. The amount of money is small in the scheme of things but it illustrates the government's reliance on astrology and unicorn sightings to guide their electricity and transit plans." I have to bring this to the floor of the Legislature because it is a false choice. You cannot say to the people of this province, "If we don't sell Hydro One, you get no infrastructure." That makes no sense whatsoever.

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

Hon. Helena Jaczek: I'm very pleased to rise in the House today, following the excellent overview of Bill 144 provided by our members: the member for Mississauga—Streetsville, the Minister of Transportation and the member for Burlington.

The Minister of Transportation gave us a broad overview of all the quite wonderful investment we are

making in public infrastructure: projects such as roads and bridges and transit. In particular, we're already seeing the effects of these investments in my riding of Oak Ridges—Markham. The new GO train station in Gormley is going to extend the Richmond Hill line up to that community in northern Richmond Hill. People are eagerly awaiting the opening of that station next year.

The frequency of GO regional rail express on the Barrie line will benefit my residents in King township. They're eagerly looking forward to the increased frequency that will make their commute so much easier. We also have many improvements to the Stouffville line. People accessing the train, whether it be from Mount Joy, Markham, Stouffville or Lincolnville—four stations in my riding along the Stouffville line—are going to benefit tremendously from the increase in the frequency of those trains.

As you'll know, Mr. Speaker, my riding is also quite rural in many parts, and so I was particularly pleased to see some of the measures to improve and streamline the regulation and promotion of the horse racing industry in Ontario: very important to residents in King township and in the town of Whitchurch-Stouffville. I was really pleased to see that this bill will authorize the Minister of Finance to establish a grant program to support live horse racing in Ontario, administered on the minister's behalf by the Ontario Lottery and Gaming Corp. This is, indeed, excellent news. We need to continue to build Ontario up.

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

Mr. Toby Barrett: We've been listening to debate this afternoon and so many proposals from members opposite—the wish lists they see within this budget measures legislation. I find it very difficult, as opposition, to get the data as far as making appropriate decisions on what is being proposed here. Much of it is on the spending side of the ledger. We hear so much about infrastructure spending, and we recognize that subways are important. We don't have any subways down in my riding. In fact, we really don't have any public transit at all in my riding.

But my concern is that so much of this debate is being presented—these ideas are being presented—in a vacuum. We have not received the fall economic statement; it's something like 11 days late. I heard very little mention from the members opposite of their budget of last spring, the 2015 budget, and virtually no mention at all about Ontario's \$300-billion debt, which is now the equivalent of 40% of Ontario's gross domestic product. We have to think about that debt. We have to think about ongoing deficits, which invariably occur with the level of spending we are seeing opposite.

This government continues to maintain that they will balance the books in three years. Ontario's Financial Accountability Officer has indicated that they're going to come up short by about \$3.5 billion. But like us, he's unable to get the figures from these people as well.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): That concludes the time we have for questions and comments.

One of the government members can reply. I recognize the member from Mississauga–Streetsville.

Mr. Bob Delaney: Thank you very much, Speaker. I thank and acknowledge my colleagues from Elgin–Middlesex–London, Kitchener–Waterloo, Oak Ridges–Markham and Haldimand–Norfolk for all their comments.

Speaker, to some of their comments: Ontario is the only jurisdiction in Canada that set a clear, definable path back to a balanced budget right at the very bottom of the recession in the fall of 2009 and never once deviated from that deficit reduction path. In fact, in budget after budget, Ontario not only met its deficit reduction targets every year but it substantially exceeded its deficit reduction targets every single year. No other government in Canada—not the Harper federal government, not the Alberta PC government and not the British Columbia Liberal government—has been able to replicate that feat. Ontario is the only one to have set and met its deficit reduction targets.

This, of course, is very much congruent with our exercise when we first came into government to find, just like the federal government has found, that the balance was actually more than \$5 billion short—\$5.6 billion in Ontario’s case. Ontario didn’t complain about it, but we set about deficit reduction, achieved a balanced budget a year ahead of schedule and then ran, prior to the onset of the recession, three consecutive budget surpluses, which enabled this province to pay down long-term debt and to finance infrastructure.

Much like the member for Kitchener–Waterloo has talked about—I don’t know whether she feels she can influence the railways, CP and CN—the need to upgrade the track bed and the bridges so that those trains can travel as fast as she described is really a key need. I know that my colleague from Oak Ridges–Markham talked about her own growth challenges too—thank you very much, Speaker; I’m out of time.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Yes; thank you. I’ll now ask for further debate.

Mr. Toby Barrett: As I indicated just recently, I think it is very important to continue the discussion of this Budget Measures Act in the context of the very recent report from Ontario’s Financial Accountability Officer. The reason I say that is because, other than going back to the budget of last spring, economic and fiscal situations have changed fairly significantly at both the provincial and federal level—even the global level since last spring. So we really don’t have much choice because the budget bill, for whatever reason, has been introduced before the fall economic statement. We don’t have the up-to-date economic and fiscal numbers from this government.

Financial Accountability Officer Stephen LeClair has projected a \$3.5-billion deficit—in spite of what I’ve been hearing this afternoon from government members—in fiscal year 2017-18. I attended his media studio presentation a week or so ago, and he posed a question to the media present. As he said, why would the average person in Ontario care that, three years from now, there’s going

to be another \$3.5 billion added to the debt, coming from Mr. LeClair’s figures? He recognized and acknowledged that he had been given short shrift on getting data from this government. So he asked the question: Why would the average Ontarian care? Then he reminded all of us present that, during the last election, a promise was made by this present government to balance the books by 2017-18.

As opposition leader Patrick Brown explained—this was in an interview he did with the Toronto Star—referring to the members opposite, “They’ve backed themselves into a corner. They have no way out other than to raise taxes or cut services,” in spite of what we’ve been hearing in debate this afternoon, adding, “They want to cut funding to doctors, close needed schools and raise hydro rates, all because of their incompetence.” Those three areas—health, education and electricity—are certainly part of the budget measures, as it was recently described, omnibus legislation.

1700

We are surprised that this government has not brought forward its fall economic statement. Therefore, we rely on the numbers from the Financial Accountability Officer. As Mr. LeClair explained: “Over the period from 2010-11 to 2014-15, Ontario reduced the deficit by an average of \$0.9 billion per year. To achieve balance in 2017-18, the government plans to reduce the deficit by an average of \$3.4 billion per year, a rate of improvement nearly four times greater than the pace of the past four years.” I don’t have my hopes up. I think the Financial Accountability Officer was suggesting this isn’t going to happen.

Last Friday, we received an economic statement from the federal government, to their credit. Let’s do a bit of a comparison. As we know, the federal Liberal Party was elected on October 19 on a pledge to deliver \$10 billion in deficit spending—and this is a familiar phrase—on infrastructure projects over three years before bringing the federal government’s budget back into a balanced position in the fourth year—so, again, more stimulus spending. Obviously, we see a bit of a partnership between these two levels of government.

Also just last Friday, the federal finance department projected a budget deficit of \$3 billion in fiscal 2015-16. This is a big swing from the \$2.4-billion surplus forecast by the previous Conservative government. That’s about a \$6-billion discrepancy there. I will say, Speaker, and you will remember, we’ve seen this film before. Liberals come in—

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: That’s right.

Mr. Toby Barrett: I hear people agreeing.

Liberals come in with big spending plans—I’ve been hearing this all afternoon—and they claim that—it happened with the previous Conservative government—essentially, they’ve cooked the books and left the cupboards bare. Not only the Liberals say this. I recall 25 years ago, NDP member Bob Rae basically saying the same thing about the David Peterson Liberals, of all political parties. Bob Rae blamed David Peterson—

Interjections.

Mr. Toby Barrett: I hear a bit of feedback from across the way.

Ms. Catherine Fife: We're still hearing about Bob Rae.

Mr. Toby Barrett: Bob Rae, the Liberal—Bob Rae, the NDP at the time, of course—blamed David Peterson for spending all the money that the NDP wanted to spend. I remember 25 years ago, I had a young family. I wasn't too involved in politics at the time, but I just imagined the NDP forming government, getting into the finance ministry building, running down the hall to the safe, and it was empty. That was the perception I had 25 years ago. We've seen this film before.

What does a new government do in a situation like that or a situation that they feel they're in? What do Liberals invariably do? They run up the debt. They continue to run deficits. They're public about it—very public; both federally and provincially, we're going to see another three years of deficits—and they spend money they don't have.

I just want to set the stage for the discussion with respect to the wish lists that are being presented opposite during debate on this budget measures bill. Fiscal year 2016-17: The deficit is now expected to grow to \$3.9 billion—this is federal—compared to a surplus of \$2.7 billion in the April budget. Go figure.

One other thing that I do want to stress—Speaker, you were here; I was here—the Financial Accountability Officer points this out in his report: “Growth in Ontario's economy has slowed markedly since the robust expansion” of a number of years ago. That robust expansion—he gives the years—coincided with the Mike Harris government.

“Over the period from 1995 to 2000”—this is from our Financial Accountability Officer—“the average annual growth rate of real GDP was 4.6%.” Compare that to the past eight years. Ontario's real economic growth has averaged just 1.2% a year.

So I ask all present, as you make your pitch for subways and infrastructure spending, spending in your own ridings—we're not that long out of the election, and I know it's important to buy votes across the way, but we just have to make these kinds of commitments and statements in the context that, back under Mike Harris, we had a rate of economic growth of 4.6% a year; over the last eight years, we've had a rate of growth of 1.2% under the McGuinty-Wynne government.

These are the numbers. In my view, the numbers don't lie—in this case, because they're coming from Mr. LeClair, the Ontario government-appointed Financial Accountability Officer.

He goes on: Between fiscal year 2007-08 and fiscal year 2009-10, personal income tax revenue in Ontario dropped 8.1%. That's not a good sign. And get this: Corporate tax revenue in the province of Ontario dropped by over 50%. We all think of those lost 300,000 manufacturing jobs.

Mr. LeClair points out that at the same time, Ontario's program spending—the kind of things we're hearing in

this Budget Measures Act—increased sharply by \$11.5 billion in 2009-10 from the previous year. That's a pretty big increase. That's heading close to \$12 billion—largely as a result of stimulus spending on shovel-ready infrastructure.

And what do we hear today from Premier Wynne and the members opposite? When in doubt, spend again. Ramp up the infrastructure spending, the stimulus spending, the kind of spending we're hearing about on subways, the kind of spending that encourages other levels of government, certainly at the municipal level, to dust off that old project that didn't make sense 10 years ago. “Here comes the money”—lots of work for staff at the federal, provincial and Ontario level. It gives MPPs something to do: to come out and attend a ceremony and cut a ribbon.

I have always questioned this concept of spending your way to prosperity. This was proven not to work under the Bob Rae government. You cannot spend your way to prosperity. We saw it with this government five years ago, with stimulus spending that didn't work. We saw it with Bob Rae. That was 25 years ago. It didn't work, back in the day, with Bob Rae. What you end up doing is you spend your way into a hole of debt. How do you get out of that hole? Stop spending. Granted, it certainly may have created a lot of government jobs. It did pave a few roads. I know some arenas were constructed. But it really had no lasting effect, in my opinion, on Ontario's unemployment rate. Granted, it does buy a few votes for government members who have the wherewithal to show up with these cheques.

Here we go again with the federal government. Just last Friday, we heard, “Canadians have given our government a strong mandate”—I think I just heard that this afternoon, at the provincial level—“to take a new approach to securing our prosperity.” This gets back to the magical, whimsical secret to prosperity. I'm quoting Bill Morneau, the federal finance minister. He says, “I intend to use the fiscal and budgetary tools at my disposal to do just that....”

“We must also invest”—code word for “spend,” obviously—“in our economy, our communities, and in Canadians themselves. That includes transformative”—who wrote this speech? This sounds so familiar from what I've been hearing in the last couple of budgets. “That includes”—here it comes—“transformative investments in infrastructure and a new plan for a strong middle class.” That's quite a ring to it. I think we've heard this before.

1710

Obviously, Ottawa is going to press ahead with stimulus spending in a weak economy. It's already pushing the budget further into debt; they promised to balance in four years. The federal plan—again, we read this in the media this Friday—is going to focus on transportation; fighting climate change—I see some similarity here; adding new housing units—I don't know whether he's heard what this government plans to do with the taxation.

Morneau did an interview in Turkey quite recently. I'll quote him again: “The campaign commitment around

infrastructure spending was a very important part of our commitment, and we will be moving forward”—moving forward, that’s a good phrase—“on that commitment in a fashion that will ensure that we find the right projects”—that goes back to the shovel-ready, trying to find some project that somebody put together maybe five years ago that never saw the light of day—“to make a real difference for the Canadian economy.”

So find those right projects, dust off those proposals. Our municipal partners are probably going to get, I don’t know, maybe a few weeks’ notice. They’re going to have to scramble. Hopefully, those municipalities that like to spend money on projects they would never fund themselves—I hope they have some projects ready so they don’t miss the boat when the big money starts to flow.

Going back to the Financial Accountability Officer’s report, as he states, “Ontario’s economic growth over the past eight years has been largely driven by household spending, residential investment”—you don’t want to tax that, by the way—“and government expenditures,” not driven by auto, not driven by steel or mining or forestry or agriculture. He goes on to report, “On average, net trade and business investment have been a drag on overall economic growth since 2007.” This is in Ontario.

“In 2000”—I was an MPP back then under Mike Harris—“Ontario merchandise exports to the US represented 9.8% of total US imports. By 2014, Ontario’s share”—here we come—“had dropped to just 5.5%.” Again, the numbers don’t lie. This was presented by Mr. LeClair.

I really feel it’s important to recognize that in any analysis, any debate on this Budget Measures Act, we have to be cognizant of the long-term unemployment problem that has worsened in the province of Ontario compared to even before the recession. It remains at 19%, long-term unemployment. These are people who may never work again. It’s six percentage points higher than prior to the recession, and we know for the long-term unemployed, it really does damage to their long-term future, essentially.

How did all this Liberal taxing and spending affect employment? Well, under McGuinty—a big spender during the good times that had been created previously by the Mike Harris regime—the unemployment rate stayed static from 2003-08, after which it rose to 9% in 2009. It kind of drifted back to 7.8% in 2012. We’re now sitting at a 7.3% unemployment rate. Mr. McGuinty’s predecessor, a Premier named Harris, cut income taxes by 30% and saw unemployment drop from 8.7% in 1995 to 5.8% in 2000, inched up a bit to 6.9% in 2003.

Fast-forward to this year—and it is hard to get up-to-date data because we had the budget, but we don’t have any fall economic statement. January to May—I think this is important when we’re talking about government spending across the way—the average wage settlement of 1.5% for Ontario’s broader public sector employees is the highest increase in four years. I don’t know whether this is going to be a continuing trend. We’ve all witnessed the teacher negotiations. We saw the money changing hands,

but we haven’t been given the real costs of those deals that were struck.

Then we questioned where the spending is on priorities like health and education. Health care spending is limited to 1.7% a year, well below the 3% that we have seen in past years with this present government. This partly explains the measures to cut physician fees and the move towards activity-based hospital funding. It’s important for all of us to continue to talk to doctors and hospitals in our areas about this.

Education spending is projected to grow by less than half the base of the past four years. Good luck with that one; we’ll see how that works out. How will they accomplish that? Well, closing schools, for one; that’s one way to cut spending in the education sector. Obviously, it’s not by finding savings and not achieving this net zero that we hear about, by finding savings in compensation, salaries and benefits.

I’ll just wrap up. I think I mentioned this in my two-minute presentation: Ontario has a \$300-billion debt. It’s now sitting at 40% of our gross domestic product. Let’s listen to what Moody’s and Standard and Poor’s have to say about that.

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

Ms. Cindy Forster: It’s a pleasure to get a couple of minutes to talk about this great big bill. I have to tell you, I haven’t read it entirely, because it would probably take two months to actually get through this entire bill. I find it interesting that a bill like this gets tabled and then we’re into debate immediately, when in many other times when there are issues before this House, we get the bill and then we never hear about the bill or get to debate the bill for months on end.

This bill is an omnibus bill that has some poison pills in it. The Liberals are getting very good at actually putting poison pills in their bill. They use it as a wedge issue so that later on, when we go into election mode in a year or two, they’ll be able to say, “Well, you know, the NDP voted against this bill. It could have been there for their constituents” or “The PCs voted against this bill” or “They supported this bill. Why are they trying to say something different now?”

There is one particular poison pill in this bill that we’ve dealt with before, back in 2012-13. It was when the member from—

Mr. Monte McNaughton: Lambton–Kent–Middlesex.

Ms. Cindy Forster:—Lambton county had a private member’s bill, which was actually going to try and achieve what the government’s going to achieve here now. The government agreed to put this into a programming motion, because at the time they didn’t have the guts to actually bring the legislation forward, because we were in a minority government. Then, at the end of the day, when we voted on the programming motion, every Liberal in House, with the exception of the Minister of Transportation and former member Mrs. Cansfield, voted against the bill.

So we find it here now and we wonder why we find it here. But I'm going to have 20 minutes to talk about that, probably later this week; I just look forward to refreshing everyone's memory.

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

Hon. Liz Sandals: I'm pleased to speak for a moment or two on Bill 144, the Budget Measures Act. I think it's worth putting this in context. It's actually very common that when we have the budget each year that there's a spring budget bill, which is some immediate amendments to legislation that are required to implement the budget, and then a second one in the fall. This is essentially the fall budget bill.

It does have a number of issues it covers. For example, people will recall from the budget last spring that we were going to make changes to support the sale of beer in grocery stores. This is actually the act in which those amendments to the Liquor Control Act, to allow sales of beer in grocery stores, are taking place.

1720

There have been lots of discussions. I'm sure that in your constit office, just like mine, one of those frequently asked questions is, "When are you going to get rid of the debt retirement charge on people's electricity bills?" The debt retirement charge is being removed from residential electricity users' bills beginning January 1, 2016.

What this act does is propose to end the debt retirement charge for all electricity users by April 1, 2018, which means we're rolling forward the date on which the debt retirement charge would end for commercial, industrial and other non-residential users.

There are amendments to the Tobacco Tax Act.

I note again the racetrack that we share, Speaker—one of the questions I often hear is, "When are you going to bring together the Ontario Racing Commission and the OLG?" Again, the legislation is in here to allow that to happen.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): The member for Lambton–Kent–Middlesex.

Mr. Monte McNaughton: I'm happy to rise for a couple of minutes to add my comments to this debate on Bill 144 and to follow my colleague from Haldimand–Norfolk, Mr. Barrett. It's always great to listen to the member from Haldimand–Norfolk. He's my kind of Conservative, a fiscal conservative who obviously advocates to stop the tax-and-spending ways that we're seeing on behalf of this government.

The member from Haldimand–Norfolk talked about the \$300-billion debt we have in Ontario. That's 40% of GDP, and that is an alarming figure.

Of course, he talked about unemployment in the province. We have over half a million people unemployed in the province today. Those people are waking up every morning and they don't have a lot of hope for the future, unfortunately. We continue to see this government bringing forward legislation, but none of the legislation is actually an economic action plan, an economic plan to create jobs in the province of Ontario, let alone balancing the budget.

One thing I'd like to get on the record, Mr. Speaker—I asked a question in question period last week, but I think this is something that this government needs to talk about, and that is the expansion at the Billy Bishop airport.

We learned today that with the federal Liberal government's decision not to expand at Billy Bishop, that's going to cost one of Ontario's factories a lot of jobs, and that's Bombardier. They're going to lose a \$2-billion order there. If this government would only advocate to the federal government and stand up for Ontario, stand up for Ontario's workers, and urge Prime Minister Trudeau to allow this expansion to go ahead, it will create 2,000 jobs. It will create \$250 million in economic impact to the city of Toronto alone, every single year.

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

Ms. Catherine Fife: The member from Haldimand–Norfolk really focused on the economic impact of some of the fallout from this bill, and that, of course, embraces this philosophy that you have to sell off Hydro One in order to get infrastructure, which we know is a false choice. I just want to comment on that piece.

The hydro privatization experiment has failed in Ontario already. 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. That needs to get on the record.

A business in Waterloo region—just to support the member from Haldimand–Norfolk—wrote to me. This is from the Brick Brewing Co. This is from the president, George Croft. He says, "This is to inform you of the situation much higher than anticipated energy rates has created for my company.

"We were yesterday advised that a 20% increase in our electrical costs would be effective as of May 1, 2014. This represents a total increase of \$75,000 for our three facilities....

"We will also see our natural gas costs increase by 12% over the same period....

"I am writing because it is becoming impossible to reconcile the Ontario government's very public platform of job creation with the barriers to growth that our business seems to far too frequently suffer.

"We are the largest Canadian-owned brewery in Ontario yet regulations strangely favour global brewing conglomerates, subsidies serve to keep small brewers small" and now they have the high electricity rates to contend with.

"Ontario is becoming unkind to commerce. I'm writing in the hopes that you might begin to act quickly and definitively to avoid a slow diminishing of the industrial heart of our provincial economy."

That goes back to energy prices. That goes back to the sell-off of Hydro One and the privatization and carving away that resource. Energy rates are going to go up, and the economy will suffer because of it.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): That concludes our questions and comments. I return to the member for Haldimand–Norfolk for his response.

Mr. Toby Barrett: Yes. I certainly appreciate the feedback. It contributes to what we've been discussing this afternoon. I know that much of the discussion across the way has been about spending. We do have to point out that when you've got a \$300-billion debt, there's a spending item right there: interest on that debt. That's—what?—something like \$10 billion a year. It was just mentioned that if we had a ministry of interest, it would be the third largest after spending on health, which is a priority, and spending on education, which is a priority.

What I find lacking—granted, there's no fall economic statement, and things have changed. It seems that this year's budget is becoming ancient history. I'm not hearing of a specific plan on how to accomplish this wish list. Some people feel there are some important things in this Budget Measures Act about getting beer into grocery stores, but when you have a debt level that's 40% of the gross domestic product, that's more money in interest than we spend on community and social services to help those in our society who are less fortunate.

That's a priority in our society. That's the nature of our society, and I didn't hear any discussion about that. Sure, beer in grocery stores is fine, or more surveillance on illegal tobacco to try to deal with the failures of the past. But you've got to get the numbers straight. You've got to look at the real world if you want to achieve this wish list that is being presented this afternoon. You never did have a revenue problem; you had a spending problem. Now you've got a spending and a revenue problem.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate? The member for London–Fanshawe.

Applause.

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: Gosh, what a warm welcome. Thank you.

Ms. Catherine Fife: It's so rare.

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: It is very rare.

Mr. Monte McNaughton: The opposition is united.

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: Someone just made a comment from the Conservatives that this side of the House is united on one particular issue, which is not selling off Hydro One, which is kind of unusual because we're different political animals. To see eye to eye on something so basic—you would think this government would come around to common sense and reasonableness when it comes to not selling off an asset that's actually a revenue-generating tool that we use.

Speaker, I want to thank you for the opportunity. I'm always proud to stand in this Legislature on behalf of my constituents in London–Fanshawe. I rise today to speak on Bill 144, An Act to implement Budget measures and to enact or amend certain other statutes.

I'd like to thank my colleague from Kitchener–Waterloo for sharing her thoughts on this bill. She is probably one of the most interesting debaters, I think, in this House. I love how she incorporates real-life stories about her daughter, Claire, and the word problem-solving math we all used to do that was kind of frustrating. So

it's always very good to hear from our finance critic. She's very thoughtful and she always likes to make sure that we follow the money.

When you talk about things that don't add up, this side of the House, the Liberal government, gets riled up, because the numbers don't add up. Even when the member from Haldimand–Norfolk spoke about the numbers and gave out specifics, you heard a lot of chatter from that side of the House, from the government side, because they don't like to admit their numbers don't add up.

1730

Part of the reason we're talking about numbers—that we need to have this information—is because they're not transparent on this deal. They're not transparent in many ways, and I'll give you some examples.

First, there were no consultations within the public realm. They didn't travel this Hydro One idea. They didn't ask the public. They didn't do it. That's the first problem. The other situation: they didn't anticipate that their own person—the government refused to co-operate with the Financial Accountability Officer. The FAO could not get a copy of Ed Clark's analysis of the sale, even though a guiding principle of the Ed Clark panel was that the decision process remain transparent, professional and independently validated. You have to ask yourself what this government is afraid of that they don't put out the numbers, open up the process and consult with the public. So we have to ask what is happening on that side of the House.

It does kind of surprise me a little bit that members are standing up and actually talking about the positive results of selling Hydro One. How ironic is that? How ironic is it that you're talking about selling a public asset that brings us revenue to help support our public services and, "We think that's okay because we're going to own 40%. That makes it all okay, because we're not selling it all. We're better than the Harris government, because they sold off the 407, but we're only selling 60%. We're keeping 40%, so that makes it all okay." Not okay. Sorry, Liberal government. It's not okay to keep 40% and say it's still in public hands. It's not in public hands. One hundred percent ownership, public sector, is what we call public ownership and public accountability and the public owning it—each individual constituent owning that. Forty percent is not ownership in the public hands.

The other thing: I was disappointed today; I was actually kind of deflated. I was gearing up to listen to the Minister of Finance, because we've been building this up—you've been building this up. This government has been building up Hydro One, and what a great deal this is. We are so not seeing the future by not selling Hydro One for infrastructure: That's what you've been telling us. In question period, we've been saying to you that it's not a good idea.

We've now gone through the committee process in estimates. We've done all the work, all that information back and forth. We get the bill, this bill right here—I can hold this up; I assume it's not a prop if I hold the bill.

Interjection.

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: Is it a prop?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I appreciate the question. Generally speaking, if you want to refer to the bill, that's okay. But if you're holding it up to make a big point, that's probably not good.

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: I think I'll hold it down here.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Okay.

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: Really, after the estimates, this is what comes out of the discussions, right? All the ministries come and present. Our wonderful finance critic here questions you up and down and makes sure we get the numbers correct. Through all that discussion, we find out that you're not going to reap the benefits of selling Hydro One for \$4 billion, as you've been telling us. The reality is that it's going to raise \$1.4 billion in net cash for infrastructure.

So, after the estimates situation, the ministries coming forward, everybody being questioned on their budgets, this is the bill we get. This is the bill we get, and then we come back to the House and debate it. I am sitting on the edge of my seat with anticipation to hear the explanation from this Minister of Finance why this is such a good deal. Convince me. Sell it.

What do we get, Speaker? We get him talking for six minutes—actually, it was five minutes and 16 seconds; I timed it. The table can correct me, and I can always correct my record, but I think it was five minutes and 16 seconds. It'll be interesting to know if I'm right. That's all he had. Really? That's all you've got when you're selling one of the biggest public assets in Ontario and nobody agrees with you? The Conservatives don't agree with you, the NDP doesn't agree with you and the public doesn't agree with you, 83% don't agree with you selling off hydro, and the guy who's leading the charge—well, the Premier too; I mean, let's face it, they're a tag team there, leading the charge. He's got the opportunity to tell us all about it and what a great buy-in. We should have buy-in for this, because we're all going to get infrastructure out of this deal—no.

Ms. Cindy Forster: Even the chamber doesn't agree.

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: No, even the chamber of commerce. That's right. I'm so glad my colleague from Welland mentioned that. The chamber of commerce is telling you—very good point. I wrote some notes earlier when he was speaking. He actually talked about how they're helping business. The chamber of commerce tells you it's not helping. It's going to hurt business. It's going to hurt business and we're going to lose jobs, Speaker.

Back to the debate: That was a let-down, Speaker. He's going to share his time with his wonderful colleague from York South—

Ms. Catherine Fife: York South–Weston.

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: York South–Weston? That's all? I thought there were three.

She is a great member. I really enjoy working across the way from the member. But I do have to be honest: You let me down. You didn't debate for the whole hour. The minister went five minutes and 16 seconds, and the

member from York South–Weston went about, oh, a total of 16, so about 11 minutes.

Ms. Catherine Fife: She did more—14.

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: She did more? Sorry, 14.

I was kind of hoping I could get a little more out of that debate in order to give you some feedback, but there was none. There wasn't a lot going on in that debate from the government. That fell flat.

The member from Nipissing's rendition of this debate, for an hour, was extremely informative. You guys should have listened to it on the parliamentary channel, because he talked about the Trillium Trust and he talked about how the Trillium Trust needs to have transparency so the people of Ontario have trust in what's going on. This government really needs to rebuild trust for the people of Ontario. Nobody trusts the sale of Hydro One—83%.

I was knocking on doors this weekend. It was the first snowfall in London. The flakes were huge. It was the best packing snow you could ever have for the first snowfall. I went out and I was knocking on doors, and I came to this first door—nice man—and I asked him, "Would you sign my petition for stopping the sale of Hydro One?" And do you know what he said, Speaker? He said, "Oh, what's the point? This government is going to do what they want anyway. It's already in progress."

People are discouraged. They don't want Hydro One being sold off, but you know what? They feel like it doesn't matter. This is a majority government. They're not going to listen to anybody. It's a big problem if you are a majority government and your ears have been turned off because, regardless if you are a majority or minority government, you have an obligation. You have an obligation to people in your riding; you have an obligation to people in this province to instill feelings or a passion about government, that they feel engaged in what you're doing.

When I was elected in 2011, it was a minority government, and people were excited about government because they felt they had a voice. In this majority government, people feel like you're shutting them out, shutting them off, shutting them down. But that isn't going to stop us on this side, Speaker, because that is our job. Our job is to tell you what people are saying back in our ridings. It's a terrible shame that they don't listen. Arrogance runs supreme, and you know what's happening is that they're getting rewarded by getting re-elected.

It's not because you're doing a good job. I mean, yes, there are some things—yes, okay, you're not all bad. I have to say there are some things you're doing well. You can always do better. But I don't think people rewarded you this time with a majority government because you did a good job last government. I was experiencing what happened, and what I was experiencing, and a lot of the other members on this side of the House, is that you had the Ornge scandal. That Ornge scandal really, Speaker—people's lives were at stake.

1740

Oh, the chemotherapy scandal. Sometimes we think about scandals and we think about the money, right? But

the chemotherapy scandal—that was life and death. That was a complete lack of oversight and mismanagement. That’s the highest cost with this government as far as I’m concerned.

So you’ve got the chemotherapy, you had Ornge, you had the gas plants, and that ticket item, of course, skyrocketed, yet it doesn’t look like anybody cares over there. You know, “We got elected again, so we can just keep doing what we did before.” No. Hydro One is the wrong decision to make in this government, in this time, ever. There’s no excuse for selling a public asset.

Scandal after scandal and then—and I don’t want to offend the member from Sudbury but I do have to mention it—we had that big by-election, and to have that happening as well does not bode well.

Interjections.

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: Again, clapping because someone gets elected doesn’t mean it’s a success. Success is defined in many different ways. Success is not winning a seat. Success is about how you treat people. That’s success.

Success can also be defined as how you treat other people you work with. In a minority government, we had a lot of respect. We had some kind of leverage around here. I can see the two members here from Welland and Kitchener–Waterloo saying, “Right on. We did. We were listened to. We negotiated things into the budget. We negotiated the Financial Accountability Office.” So that was great.

Interjections.

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: And that was success for you, too.

So success can be when you actually work with people across the way and listen to what they have to say. It’s not always about being elected and saying, “I won.” How did you win? How did you get there? You know when you play basketball or baseball or some sport activity and the winning team says, “We won. Right on.” And they had fouls, they actually hurt somebody on the field because they twisted their ankle because someone pushed them out of the way, but they won the game. Do you want to win that way? I guess if you do, that’s your prerogative. That’s who you are. You’re okay with winning at any cost.

You’re not winning when you sell Hydro One. Don’t do that at any cost. Next time, when there’s another election, if you all win again—if that’s what you think, that you’ve done your job, that’s not always the case. There are a lot of political angles at play when there’s an election. It’s whoever your leader is at the time. It’s the policy and platforms you make. It’s whether or not you did good casework on the ground. Have you met your constituents? Have you spoken out about issues they care about?

Hon. Reza Moridi: Have you knocked on doors?

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: Well, that’s right: Have you knocked on doors? So there are a lot of ingredients that go into this recipe of success. And then sometimes you just kind of ride the coattails of the wave, kind of

like what happened in the federal government. You ride that wave of coattails of whatever party.

Success is not about winning. Success is about the job that you do for the people you represent and how you affect their lives. Measure success that way. Because if you measure success that way, you won’t sell Hydro One. You’ll stop dead in your tracks, you’ll put the brakes on, and you’ll say, “You know what? That Teresa Armstrong, she made some sense today. She was talking about how people feel and what success means and how I do my job, and it’s not always just about cutthroat numbers.”

I know when we talked about numbers, you all got riled up. But when we were talking about doing the right thing, that doesn’t always mean power and profits. Those things will come if you do the right thing. Hydro One already gives you a profit. It gives you revenue. So there you go; you don’t have a reason to sell it. If you do the right thing, that just rolls out onto paper. You’ve got a profit.

When I was elected in 2011, I wasn’t sitting here going, “Well, the people told me they wanted me, so I’ve done whatever I”—

Interjection.

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: Yes, exactly. I heard one of the members—I think it was Mr. Fedeli there from Nipissing—talking about how awful this is, and that he brought forward the numbers on the gas plants when the previous Premier Dalton McGuinty said that it was only \$40 million; that’s all it cost to cancel these contracts. And he was saying, “No, no, no. I had evidence. I had proof.” He’s also saying this now. We’ve been talking about it, too. Really, we led the charge; the NDP leads the charge when it comes to not selling public assets. But today, he just happened to be talking about it in his debate for an hour. It was really well received. You should really hear it again. He was talking about, “Don’t do this because the numbers don’t add up, the numbers aren’t correct.”

The House leader was saying, “Well, that’s not what the mandate of the people told me,” and the member from Barrie was saying something, and the House leader said, “Well, she got elected. They elected me.” It’s not success. Success is not about an election; success is the job that you do at the end of the day, when you can close your door at home, put your head on your pillow and say, “You know what? I did the right thing for the people of Ontario.”

Some 83% of the people do not want you to sell off hydro. The chamber of commerce does not want you to sell off hydro. The Conservatives—the Conservatives—don’t want you to sell off hydro. Now, they could be doing something political—we don’t know—but they don’t want you to sell off hydro.

Now, you know where we’re coming from. You know what the NDP talks about: “Don’t sell your public assets.” So you know that.

Interjections.

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: What did they say?

Ms. Cindy Forster: That you're taking drugs.

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: Pardon me? I'd love to know who said that because, later on, I'd like to have a respectful conversation with you about that comment being completely inappropriate in this House. You need to show professional respect for everybody, and if you want to say something like that—and I'm not saying who it was—you need to say it up front and you need to own it. And you need to own the sale of Hydro One, because I hope that, in the next election, the people of Ontario will hold you accountable. The comment you just made, I think all of you making that decision—that's the appropriate flip of what you're doing. You're not thinking straight when you sell Hydro One. You're not.

Don't sell Hydro One. You know what? If nothing else, take Hydro One out of this budget and let's debate it in a proper forum.

So, Speaker, I want to thank you for the time that I had today to speak about this budget bill, and I do appreciate everyone listening.

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

Mr. Glenn Thibeault: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I also want to thank my colleague from London–Fanshawe for her 20-minute debate, which I listened to attentively.

There were a few things that I'd like to highlight from her presentation: Not once did they offer any suggestions on what they would do. All they did was just talk about Hydro One or something—

Ms. Daiene Vernile: Where's the plan? What's the plan?

Mr. Glenn Thibeault: There's nothing there talking about a plan on what they would do to help Ontarians. What we're doing on this side—and that was the question she asked earlier, about five minutes in: What is happening on this side of the House? Well, I can tell you what is happening on this side of the House, Mr. Speaker. We're investing in Ontario. We're building Ontario up.

I can tell you that just with northern Ontario, for example, just a couple of weeks ago, \$69 million was invested in northern infrastructure on highways, in ridings of members from that party. Timiskaming–Cochrane, Timmins—all of these areas are getting investment from this government because we see the importance of investing in Ontario. There is \$14 million in Sudbury for the television and film industry. I know I don't have enough time to talk about all the great investments that are happening in Sudbury, that are happening in north-eastern Ontario and northern Ontario and throughout the province.

It is this budget, it is this economic statement that we are so proud of because we are building Ontario up, creating jobs and making sure that this is the best province not only—

Ms. Daiene Vernile: Hundreds of jobs; thousands and thousands of jobs.

Mr. Glenn Thibeault: Hundreds of thousands of jobs, as my colleague is mentioning. We're doing a great job of that, and I'm very proud of this statement and I'm very proud of this government.

1750

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

Mr. Monte McNaughton: I just wanted to commend the member from London–Fanshawe. I thought she delivered an excellent 20-minute speech and added a lot to this debate. I think, quite frankly, she brought what she's hearing in her riding of London–Fanshawe to this House and brought those concerns to the government.

I know that I'm hearing the exact same things from my constituents. They're deeply concerned about the sale of Hydro One, but more importantly, they're deeply concerned about how this government manages taxpayer dollars. They have no respect for taxpayers across the province. They've been in power now for 12 years, and quite frankly, things are getting worse. I feel that they're expediting the hole that they're digging this province in.

Quite frankly, the legacy of this government is disastrous: It's waste, scandal, selling off public assets. It's the future generations of this province that are going to pay dearly for 12 years of this mismanagement and waste. It's my child and it's children across the province who are going to be paying for these mistakes.

For these government members to sit back and essentially go with the flow of decisions that are being made in the Premier's office, I think, is the wrong thing for these members to do.

I just want to close by referring to what I thought was an excellent article in today's *Globe and Mail*, titled "Is the Ontario Finance Minister Living in Fiscal Fantasy-land?" It talks about the government assuming what revenue growth is going to be, and of course, they're way off on that.

I just urge the government to consider in which direction they're taking this province.

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

Ms. Catherine Fife: It's a pleasure to comment on the member from London–Fanshawe and the context that she brought to this debate.

First, though, I'd like to welcome Paisley and the member from Kenora–Rainy River. Actually, it's really good that Paisley's here in the House today. She's as cute as can be.

Some of the members heckled us and they said, "Well, why shouldn't we sell Hydro One?" You shouldn't sell Hydro One because it is generating revenue that you as a government need. The Financial Accountability Officer has blown your entire financial plan up with his report that he brought to this Legislature. He goes on to say that the FAO estimated that the province will lose net revenues of \$444 million a year by 2025, which is going to affect Ms. Paisley right there. It's her future that you're gambling on, just so that you can try to cook up the books and balance that budget for 2017-18.

To add insult to injury, in addition, an \$800-million special payment from Hydro One following the IPO is borrowed money. Hydro One is borrowing money to give

to the provincial government, but Hydro One customers will receive no benefit from this loan. Not only that, but when the IPO was negotiated, this province—this government—paid \$3 million to do so—unbelievable.

You are doubling down on a poor economic strategy which will affect future generations. Ms. Paisley is going to come here one day, and she's going to say, "What were you thinking?"

At least we will be able to stand in our place and say that we challenged you, day in and day out, because selling off Hydro One is not good for the people of this province. It certainly isn't going to buy more infrastructure when you can't even figure out how to fund the infrastructure that you have right now on the books.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions or comments? The member for York South–Weston.

Mrs. Laura Albanese: I think so.

Ms. Eleanor McMahon: Sorry, Mr. Speaker. I shouldn't be standing. I apologize.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): That's okay.

Mrs. Laura Albanese: I thought it was going to be me. Thank you.

I want to thank the member for London–Fanshawe for her comments on the Budget Measures Act, 2015.

I do want to specify, though, that—I know she lamented the fact that the government didn't speak longer in the leadoff. I spoke for roughly 15 minutes. I spoke about the debt retirement charge and the fact that it will be removed from commercial, industrial and non-residential users nine months earlier than what was projected—in April 2018—but I didn't hear any comments on that.

Changes to the Ontario Interactive Digital Media Tax Credit—I also spoke about the horse racing industry and the Horse Racing Partnership Plan and how OLG would support live horse racing in Ontario; and how we're moving the regulation to MAG's Licence Appeal Tribunal. I spoke about the new grant program to support live horse racing.

I also spoke about the security sector and how Ontario is taking a leadership role in establishing the Cooperative Capital Markets Regulatory System.

I further spoke about the amendments we are proposing to the Trillium Trust Act to increase transparency. I also spoke about the investments that our government is making in infrastructure, as we heard, in many different ridings, helping small business; about investing in people's skills. I spoke about our government's vision to build up our province.

In conclusion, I want to say that—she knows this well—we're all here to do our very best to represent our constituencies and rest our head on our pillow, knowing that we've done so.

The Chair (Mr. Ted Arnott): That concludes our time for questions and comments. I return to the member for London–Fanshawe.

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: I'd like to thank the member from Sudbury, the member from Lambton–Kent–Middlesex, the member from Kitchener–Waterloo and the member from York South–Weston.

In particular to the member from York South–Weston, I did listen to your debate and you did touch on each one of those. In jest, it was like a little bit of an infomercial, because when you think about how big this bill is, and you only talked for 15 minutes, there were little snippets. It would have been nice to have a little more detail on those things.

I did focus on Hydro One because that is one of the two biggest items, other than the Trillium Trust changes, that is extremely concerning. Some of the other items you mentioned: They're not horrible; right? We're making sure that we get on the record and really stress passionately that Hydro One is the wrong decision. It is a false presentation when you say, "We can't do this unless we throw the furniture into the fire." That doesn't make a lot of sense.

I think most people, when they come to those cross-roads in their lives, make different decisions about putting everything at stake. It's just like rolling the dice. You're gambling away Hydro One, putting it on the table. You're risking Hydro One. We don't agree with it. We think it's a revenue source that needs to stay in public hands, continue to reap the benefits of that income that comes out year after year, about \$500 million—

Ms. Cindy Forster: They shouldn't be able to sleep at night because 83% of people—

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: Yes. As the public said, 83% do not want to sell it. The point of my debate today was to drive that home to you, and I'm glad I did.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

CORRECTION OF RECORD

Ms. Cindy Forster: Point of order.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Point of order, the member for Welland.

Ms. Cindy Forster: Yes. I'd just like to correct my record from last Thursday during the private member's bill of the member from Nickel Belt. I said there were 1.7 francophones living in Ontario, and I believe it should have been 1.7 million. Thank you.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I'm glad we got that cleared up.

It being 6 o'clock, this House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 9 a.m.

The House adjourned at 1759.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO
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Speaker / Président: Hon. / L'hon. Dave Levac

Clerk / Greffière: Deborah Deller

Clerks-at-the-Table / Greffiers parlementaires: Todd Decker, Tonia Grannum, Trevor Day, William Short

Sergeant-at-Arms / Sergent d'armes: Dennis Clark

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Albanese, Laura (LIB)	York South–Weston / York-Sud–Weston	
Anderson, Granville (LIB)	Durham	
Armstrong, Teresa J. (NDP)	London–Fanshawe	
Arnott, Ted (PC)	Wellington–Halton Hills	First Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Premier vice-président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée
Bailey, Robert (PC)	Sarnia–Lambton	
Baker, Yvan (LIB)	Etobicoke Centre / Etobicoke-Centre	
Balkissoon, Bas (LIB)	Scarborough–Rouge River	Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée Deputy Speaker / Vice-président
Ballard, Chris (LIB)	Newmarket–Aurora	
Barrett, Toby (PC)	Haldimand–Norfolk	
Berardinetti, Lorenzo (LIB)	Scarborough Southwest / Scarborough-Sud-Ouest	
Bisson, Gilles (NDP)	Timmins–James Bay / Timmins–Baie James	
Bradley, Hon. / L'hon. James J. (LIB)	St. Catharines	Chair of Cabinet / Président du Conseil des ministres Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille Deputy Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint du gouvernement
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Chiarelli, Hon. / L'hon. Bob (LIB)	Ottawa West–Nepean / Ottawa-Ouest–Nepean	Minister of Energy / Ministre de l'Énergie
Clark, Steve (PC)	Leeds–Grenville	Deputy Leader, Official Opposition / Chef adjoint de l'opposition officielle
Colle, Mike (LIB)	Eglinton–Lawrence	
Coteau, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Don Valley East / Don Valley-Est	Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport / Ministre du Tourisme, de la Culture et du Sport Minister Responsible for the 2015 Pan and Parapan American Games / Ministre responsable des Jeux panaméricains et parapanaméricains de 2015
Crack, Grant (LIB)	Glengarry–Prescott–Russell	
Damerla, Hon. / L'hon. Dipika (LIB)	Mississauga East–Cooksville / Mississauga-Est–Cookville	Associate Minister of Health and Long-Term Care (Long-Term Care and Wellness) / Ministre associée de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée (Soins de longue durée et Promotion du mieux-être) Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille
Del Duca, Hon. / L'hon. Steven (LIB)	Vaughan	Minister of Transportation / Ministre des Transports
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Dhillon, Vic (LIB)	Brampton West / Brampton-Ouest	
Dickson, Joe (LIB)	Ajax–Pickering	
DiNovo, Cheri (NDP)	Parkdale–High Park	
Dong, Han (LIB)	Trinity–Spadina	
Duguid, Hon. / L'hon. Brad (LIB)	Scarborough Centre / Scarborough-Centre	Minister of Economic Development, Employment and Infrastructure / Ministre du Développement économique, de l'Emploi et de l'Infrastructure
Fedeli, Victor (PC)	Nipissing	
Fife, Catherine (NDP)	Kitchener–Waterloo	
Flynn, Hon. / L'hon. Kevin Daniel (LIB)	Oakville	Minister of Labour / Ministre du Travail
Forster, Cindy (NDP)	Welland	

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French, Jennifer K. (NDP)	Oshawa	
Gates, Wayne (NDP)	Niagara Falls	
Gélinas, France (NDP)	Nickel Belt	
Gravelle, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Thunder Bay–Superior North / Thunder Bay–Superior-Nord	Minister of Northern Development and Mines / Ministre du Développement du Nord et des Mines
Gretzky, Lisa (NDP)	Windsor West / Windsor-Ouest	
Hardeman, Ernie (PC)	Oxford	
Harris, Michael (PC)	Kitchener–Conestoga	
Hatfield, Percy (NDP)	Windsor–Tecumseh	
Hillier, Randy (PC)	Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington	
Hoggarth, Ann (LIB)	Barrie	
Horwath, Andrea (NDP)	Hamilton Centre / Hamilton-Centre	Leader, Recognized Party / Chef de parti reconnu Leader, New Democratic Party of Ontario / Chef du Nouveau parti démocratique de l'Ontario
Hoskins, Hon. / L'hon. Eric (LIB)	St. Paul's	Minister of Health and Long-Term Care / Ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée
Hudak, Tim (PC)	Niagara West–Glanbrook / Niagara- Ouest–Glanbrook	
Hunter, Hon. / L'hon. Mitzie (LIB)	Scarborough–Guildwood	Associate Minister of Finance (Ontario Retirement Pension Plan) / Ministre associée des Finances (Régime de retraite de la province de l'Ontario) Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille
Jaczek, Hon. / L'hon. Helena (LIB)	Oak Ridges–Markham	Minister of Community and Social Services / Ministre des Services sociaux et communautaires
Jones, Sylvia (PC)	Dufferin–Caledon	Deputy Leader, Official Opposition / Chef adjointe de l'opposition officielle
Kiwala, Sophie (LIB)	Kingston and the Islands / Kingston et les Îles	
Kwinter, Monte (LIB)	York Centre / York-Centre	
Lalonde, Marie-France (LIB)	Ottawa–Orléans	
Leal, Hon. / L'hon. Jeff (LIB)	Peterborough	Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs / Ministre de l'Agriculture, de l'Alimentation et des Affaires rurales
Levac, Hon. / L'hon. Dave (LIB)	Brant	Speaker / Président de l'Assemblée législative
MacCharles, Hon. / L'hon. Tracy (LIB)	Pickering–Scarborough East / Pickering–Scarborough-Est	Minister of Children and Youth Services / Ministre des Services à l'enfance et à la jeunesse Minister Responsible for Women's Issues / Ministre déléguée à la Condition féminine
MacLaren, Jack (PC)	Carleton–Mississippi Mills	
MacLeod, Lisa (PC)	Nepean–Carleton	
Malhi, Harinder (LIB)	Brampton–Springdale	
Mangat, Amrit (LIB)	Mississauga–Brampton South / Mississauga–Brampton-Sud	
Mantha, Michael (NDP)	Algoma–Manitoulin	
Martins, Cristina (LIB)	Davenport	
Martow, Gila (PC)	Thornhill	
Matthews, Hon. / L'hon. Deborah (LIB)	London North Centre / London- Centre-Nord	Deputy Premier / Vice-première ministre Minister Responsible for the Poverty Reduction Strategy / Ministre responsable de la Stratégie de réduction de la pauvreté President of the Treasury Board / Présidente du Conseil du Trésor
Mauro, Hon. / L'hon. Bill (LIB)	Thunder Bay–Atikokan	Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry / Ministre des Richesses naturelles et des Forêts
McDonnell, 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
Milczyn, Peter Z. (LIB)	Etobicoke–Lakeshore	

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
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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) Murray, Hon. / L'hon. Glen R. (LIB)	York–Simcoe 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) Naqvi, Hon. / L'hon. Yasir (LIB)	Halton 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) Nicholls, Rick (PC)	Essex 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) Potts, Arthur (LIB) Qaadri, Shafiq (LIB) Rinaldi, Lou (LIB) Sandals, Hon. / L'hon. Liz (LIB) Sattler, Peggy (NDP) Scott, Laurie (PC)	Perth–Wellington Beaches–East York Etobicoke North / Etobicoke-Nord Northumberland–Quinte West Guelph London West / London-Ouest Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock	Minister of Education / Ministre de l'Éducation Deputy Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjointe de l'opposition officielle
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) Smith, Todd (PC) Sousa, Hon. / L'hon. Charles (LIB) Tabuns, Peter (NDP) Takhar, Harinder S. (LIB) Taylor, Monique (NDP) Thibeault, Glenn (LIB) Thompson, Lisa M. (PC) Vanthof, John (NDP) Vernile, Daiene (LIB) Walker, Bill (PC) Wilson, Jim (PC)	Bramalea–Gore–Malton Prince Edward–Hastings Mississauga South / Mississauga-Sud Toronto–Danforth Mississauga–Erindale Hamilton Mountain Sudbury Huron–Bruce Timiskaming–Cochrane Kitchener Centre / Kitchener-Centre Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound Simcoe–Grey	Minister of Finance / Ministre des Finances Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire de l'opposition officielle
Wong, Soo (LIB) Wynne, Hon. / L'hon. Kathleen O. (LIB)	Scarborough–Agincourt 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) Yurek, Jeff (PC) Zimmer, Hon. / L'hon. David (LIB) Vacant	Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke Elgin–Middlesex–London Willowdale Whitby–Oshawa	Minister of Aboriginal Affairs / Ministre des Affaires autochtones

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Grant Crack, Cheri DiNovo
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Chris Ballard, Steve Clark
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Eleanor McMahon, Monte McNaughton
Soo Wong
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Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills / Comité permanent des règlements et des projets de loi d'intérêt privé

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Monte Kwinter, Amrit Mangat
Kathryn McGarry, Indira Naidoo-Harris
Daiene Vernile, Bill Walker
Jeff Yurek
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Christopher Tyrell

Standing Committee on Social Policy / Comité permanent de la politique sociale

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Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Jagmeet Singh
Granville Anderson, Vic Dhillon
Amrit Mangat, Gila Martow
Kathryn McGarry, Norm Miller
Jagmeet Singh, Peter Tabuns
Glenn Thibeault
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, Sylvia Jones
Marie-France Lalonde, Harinder Malhi
Kathryn McGarry, Eleanor McMahon
Taras Natyshak, Peggy Sattler
Laurie Scott, Daiene Vernile
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Katch Koch

Continued from back cover

**MEMBERS' STATEMENTS /
DÉCLARATIONS DES DÉPUTÉS**

Hospital funding	
Mr. Todd Smith	6581
Western Muslim Students' Association	
Ms. Peggy Sattler	6581
Gala de reconnaissance à Embrun / Recognition gala in Embrun	
M. Grant Crack	6582
Kent Agricultural Hall of Fame	
Mr. Monte McNaughton	6582
International Day of Persons with Disabilities	
Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong	6582
Ottawa Redblacks / Le Rouge et Noir d'Ottawa	
Mr. John Fraser	6583
Christmas Tree Day	
Mr. Jim Wilson	6583
Fiat Chrysler casting plant	
Mr. Peter Z. Milczyn	6583
Events in Etobicoke North	
Mr. Shafiq Qaadri	6583

**REPORTS BY COMMITTEES /
RAPPORTS DES COMITÉS**

Standing Committee on Public Accounts	
Mr. Ernie Hardeman	6584
Debate adjourned	6584
Comité permanent de la justice / Standing Committee on Justice Policy	
M. Shafiq Qaadri	6584
Report adopted	6584

**INTRODUCTION OF BILLS /
DÉPÔT DES PROJETS DE LOI**

Disclosure of Information Relating to the Protection of Children Act, 2015, Bill 146, Miss Taylor / Loi de 2015 sur la divulgation de renseignements concernant la protection des enfants, projet de loi 146, Mme Taylor	
First reading agreed to	6584
Miss Monique Taylor	6585

PETITIONS / PÉTITIONS

Privatization of public assets	
Mr. Bill Walker	6585

Highway improvement	
Mr. Taras Natyshak	6585
Tenant protection	
Mr. Jim Wilson	6585
Privatization of public assets	
Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong	6585
Curling	
Mr. Randy Pettapiece	6586
Poet laureate	
Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong	6586
Privatization of public assets	
Mr. Robert Bailey	6586
Privatisation des biens publics	
M. Taras Natyshak	6586
Privatization of public assets	
Mr. Jeff Yurek	6587
Automotive industry	
Mr. Taras Natyshak	6587
Ontario Retirement Pension Plan	
Mr. Bill Walker	6587
Health care funding	
Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong	6587
Health care funding	
Mr. Randy Pettapiece	6587
Diagnostic services	
Mr. Taras Natyshak	6588
Sauble Beach land claim	
Mr. Bill Walker	6588

ORDERS OF THE DAY / ORDRE DU JOUR

Budget Measures Act, 2015, Bill 144, Mr. Sousa / Loi de 2015 sur les mesures budgétaires, projet de loi 144, M. Sousa	
Hon. Charles Sousa	6588
Mrs. Laura Albanese	6589
Mr. Victor Fedeli	6591
Mr. Taras Natyshak	6591
Ms. Ann Hoggarth	6591
Mr. Bill Walker	6592
Mrs. Laura Albanese	6592
Mr. Victor Fedeli	6592
Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong	6600
Mr. Yvan Baker	6601
Mr. Randy Pettapiece	6601
Mr. Taras Natyshak	6601
Mr. Victor Fedeli	6602
Ms. Catherine Fife	6602
Ms. Sophie Kiwala	6610
Mr. Bill Walker	6610
Mr. Paul Miller	6610

Mr. Grant Crack.....	6610
Ms. Catherine Fife	6611
Mr. Bob Delaney	6611
Hon. Steven Del Duca	6612
Ms. Eleanor McMahon	6613
Mr. Jeff Yurek	6614
Ms. Catherine Fife	6615
Hon. Helena Jaczek	6615
Mr. Toby Barrett.....	6615
Mr. Bob Delaney	6616
Mr. Toby Barrett.....	6616
Ms. Cindy Forster	6618
Hon. Liz Sandals.....	6619
Mr. Monte McNaughton.....	6619
Ms. Catherine Fife	6619
Mr. Toby Barrett.....	6620
Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong.....	6620
Mr. Glenn Thibeault	6623
Mr. Monte McNaughton.....	6623
Ms. Catherine Fife	6623
Mrs. Laura Albanese.....	6624
Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong.....	6624
Second reading debate deemed adjourned.....	6624
Correction of record	
Ms. Cindy Forster	6624

CONTENTS / TABLE DES MATIÈRES

Monday 23 November 2015 / Lundi 23 novembre 2015

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS / PRÉSENTATION DES VISITEURS

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac).....	6569
Mr. Jack MacLaren	6569
Hon. Helena Jaczek.....	6569
Mr. Robert Bailey	6569
Mr. John Vanthof	6569
Hon. Kevin Daniel Flynn	6569
Mr. Todd Smith.....	6569
Hon. David Oraziatti	6569
Mr. Michael Harris.....	6569
Ms. Sophie Kiwala	6569
Mr. Ernie Hardeman	6569
Mr. Chris Ballard	6569
Mr. Jeff Yurek.....	6569
Mr. John Fraser	6569
Mr. Monte McNaughton	6569
Mrs. Amrit Mangat	6569
Hon. Michael Coteau	6569
Mr. Jim McDonell.....	6569
Ms. Laurie Scott.....	6569
Wearing of scarves	
Ms. Sophie Kiwala.....	6570
Standing Committee on Social Policy	
Hon. Yasir Naqvi	6570
Motion agreed to	6570

ORAL QUESTIONS / QUESTIONS ORALES

Executive compensation

Mr. Patrick Brown.....	6570
Hon. Deborah Matthews	6570

Alzheimer's disease

Mr. Patrick Brown.....	6571
Hon. Dipika Damerla	6571
Hon. Eric Hoskins	6572

Privatization of public assets

Ms. Andrea Horwath.....	6572
Hon. Deborah Matthews	6572
Hon. Charles Sousa.....	6572

Privatization of public assets

Ms. Andrea Horwath.....	6573
Hon. Deborah Matthews	6573
Hon. Charles Sousa.....	6573

Land transfer tax

Mr. Steve Clark	6573
Hon. Ted McMeekin	6574

Collective bargaining

Ms. Cindy Forster.....	6574
Hon. Kevin Daniel Flynn	6574

Youth employment

Mrs. Laura Albanese	6575
Hon. Reza Moridi.....	6575

Hydro rates

Mr. John Yakabuski	6575
Hon. Deborah Matthews	6576

Privatization of public assets

Mr. Peter Tabuns	6576
Hon. Charles Sousa	6576

Home warranty program

Mr. Han Dong	6577
Hon. David Oraziatti	6577

Health care funding

Mr. Michael Harris.....	6577
Hon. Eric Hoskins	6578

Hospital funding

Ms. Andrea Horwath.....	6578
Hon. Eric Hoskins	6578

Aboriginal education

Mr. Yvan Baker.....	6579
Hon. Liz Sandals	6579

Correctional facility employees

Mr. Rick Nicholls.....	6579
Hon. Yasir Naqvi	6580

GO Transit

Ms. Catherine Fife.....	6580
Hon. Steven Del Duca.....	6580

Visitors

Mr. Rick Nicholls.....	6580
Mr. Peter Z. Milczyn	6580

DEFERRED VOTES / VOTES DIFFÉRÉS

Ending Coal for Cleaner Air Act, 2015, Bill 9, Mr. Murray / Loi de 2015 sur l'abandon du charbon pour un air plus propre, projet de loi 9, M. Murray

Third reading agreed to	6581
-------------------------------	------

Continued on inside back cover