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des débats
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Wednesday 24 February 2016

Mercredi 24 février 2016

Speaker
Honourable Dave Levac

Clerk
Deborah Deller

Président
L'honorable Dave Levac

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
OF ONTARIO

Wednesday 24 February 2016

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE
DE L'ONTARIO

Mercredi 24 février 2016

The House met at 0900.

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

Prayers.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

WASTE-FREE ONTARIO ACT, 2016

LOI DE 2016 FAVORISANT
UN ONTARIO SANS DÉCHETS

Resuming the debate adjourned on February 23, 2016, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 151, An Act to enact the Resource Recovery and Circular Economy Act, 2016 and the Waste Diversion Transition Act, 2016 and to repeal the Waste Diversion Act, 2002 / Projet de loi 151, Loi édictant la Loi de 2016 sur la récupération des ressources et l'économie circulaire et la Loi transitoire de 2016 sur le réacheminement des déchets et abrogeant la Loi de 2002 sur le réacheminement des déchets.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): When we last debated this issue, the official opposition had the floor.

Further debate? The member for Algoma–Manitoulin.

Mr. Michael Mantha: Good morning to you, Mr. Speaker. I saw you walk in with a little bit of a limp. I hope everything is good. I know you are an avid athlete, and you do spend a lot of time on the hockey rink, soccer field, badminton—you name it; I always see you all over the place putting on a good sweat. I hope you recover well from that minor injury of yours.

This morning, we are here to debate Bill 151, An Act to enact the Resource Recovery and Circular Economy Act, 2015 and the Waste Diversion Transition Act, 2015 and to repeal the Waste Diversion Act, 2002. That's quite a title.

It's pretty evident that our province is facing serious challenges with regard to waste management. Last week, the member from Mississauga–Brampton South said, "In the residential sector, 47% of household waste is diverted from landfills, but the rate for the rest of the economy is much, much lower. Existing waste diversion programs cover only 15% of Ontario's waste stream, and over the last decade, our overall waste diversion rate has stalled at 25%."

A few of my colleagues have already spoken to this, and my colleague the member from Toronto–Danforth reminded us that the Blue Box Program is something that was in place largely in the 1990s. This is prior to this

government coming to power in 2003. Since that time, in over a decade, not much else has happened, Mr. Speaker.

I see that there is a new Speaker in the chair. Good morning to you, Mr. Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Good morning.

Mr. Michael Mantha: Everyone knows that the problem still exists. My NDP colleagues and I have been raising the issue on a regular basis, and yet this government has not addressed it with real, concrete action.

We can talk about the act. New Democrats have called for greater individual producer responsibility to replace the current system of industry-funded, privately run stewardship monopolies. Individual producer responsibility is long overdue, and we think that this is quite important. This bill allows for a transition to individual producer responsibility. Finally, we're going to do something about it.

But what is very clear to me is that this is just enabling legislation. I've read through this, and I find it to be quite vague. What is clear is that in order for this bill to be successful, we need to ensure that the policies and regulations are clear and will actually create positive change. Unfortunately, these policies have not been disclosed—something that we regularly receive from this government.

Another major concern I see is that there are no timelines in this: no timelines for when the change will happen. I have seen this year after year. I'm glad that my friend from my critic portfolio, the Minister of Northern Development and Mines, has joined us here this morning—because we often see things coming from this government where they make many promises, many positive announcements, positive press releases, promise after promise, and then nothing—no action, another media release. We actually are further behind than we were eight years ago.

Interjections.

Mr. Michael Mantha: I'm glad that my friend is with us this morning. We often have these discussions about many projects, and I'll be touching on another one, so I'm glad he's here this morning.

It's entirely understandable for my colleagues and me to be skeptical. It's even more understandable for organizations and Ontarians to be cynical of this government's legislation. This government says one thing and does the opposite: "Wait. We won't sell our assets. Oh, wait one second. Who wants to buy shares?" or, "Wait, wait. We've got a billion dollars, and we're going to spend that money right now on a road to the Ring of Fire. Oh, wait,

wait. We meant we're going to spend it after the next election."

I could use my entire time here speaking about concrete examples of this government over-promising and under-delivering. What is important here is to deal with the issue at hand. We've got a waste problem, folks. We know that. We've known this for some time. We have got to address it.

In my riding of Algoma-Manitoulin, there's a small community called Goulais River. Goulais River is not a municipality; it's a local services board that provides services to its community members. They had a wonderful initiative through the Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry, which had planted some seed money for some of these municipalities to set themselves up to have a recycling program.

The Goulais River area embraced this program. The community members embraced this program and were very active in it. Unfortunately, the seed money is now gone. While the local services board was working toward a transition, because they get their empowerment through the Ministry of Northern Development and Mines, there were delays that happened which pushed them over, and they missed the opportunity to add the recycling program fees to their taxation billing. They've been without their recycling program since June of last year.

Now, it might not seem like much to you, Mr. Speaker, but these were four good jobs in Goulais River—four really good jobs. These individuals in this community really thrived and really worked hard to make sure they recycled everything. When they lost that program, it was very frustrating for them.

I've been working with the minister, and I have to say that we've had many discussions about how we could get this program up and running. However, unfortunately, the year has elapsed and the community did not wait. They went ahead and proceeded to make sure that this coming March, they're going to be able to start their recycling program once again. This is from a local services board. The community deserves it, they want it, and they have thrived and excelled. They're an example of what you can do when a community backs their leadership and actually organizes this. That's the community of Goulais River. I'm very proud to be working with their community leadership.

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When I was walking through the community during the summer community parade, I was shaking hands, talking to people and saying hi, passing out candies to the kids, and having lots of pleasantries. However, the one outstanding issue that came up time and time again when I was shaking hands was, "When are you going to give us a recycling program?"

When we see legislation like this, a community like Goulais River wants to see it go into action. They have gone into action. This is what not only Goulais River is asking for, but Ontarians are asking for, and that is: "When is this government going to go into action?"

Industry-funded organizations will still run our waste diversion programs, and could keep running them for a long time. This bill offers no timeline for when the transition to individual producer responsibility will be completed or even when it will begin. My New Democratic colleagues and I support the bill's promise of individual producer responsibility, but we are looking for some clarification, some amendments, something in here that will guarantee the government will actually follow through on their claimed goals in this bill—again, a call to action.

I don't know how this government can sell a bill where the Ministry of the Environment can propose a waste-free Ontario, while the Ministry of Energy orders up a new garbage incinerator requiring a guaranteed 10-year supply of burnable garbage equal to 750,000 tonnes a year. Can someone explain that one to me? I just don't understand that one. I know from previous dealings with the Ministry of Energy, dealing with issues in my riding, and the Ministry of the Environment, they don't seem to talk to each other. The left hand doesn't talk to the right one. But come on, guys, this is one that we need to get right.

Bill 151 does not guarantee that municipal blue box costs will go down, another big concern for the various municipalities across my riding of Algoma-Manitoulin. The provincial government has already downloaded too many costs on to municipalities. For some of you MPPs getting a call or two from your local municipalities, think about the earful I get from mine. I have 37 municipalities that are at their wits' end on their budgets and cannot take any more of these fees—21 First Nations and 15 local services boards. I hear time and time again about the burdens this government is placing on the backs of municipalities and constituents with their continuous downloading of programs, costs and services to municipalities.

Many of the municipalities across Algoma-Manitoulin just can't afford this. They are already struggling with lost revenues and increased costs. They simply can't afford any more fees. This bill must not needlessly add to the burdens on municipalities. The government proposed individual producer responsibility back in 2008 and little has changed. We have waited long enough.

Despite its title, the Waste-Free Ontario Act, it has no legislated goal of a waste-free Ontario. Under individual producer responsibility, producers pay the full cost of end-of-life management of their product and packaging and are free to find creative ways to reduce waste, but under the existing system, both consumers and producers are trapped. Under the existing system, producers have no choice but to work with the stewardship monopolies and have few incentives to find creative ways to reduce waste and packaging and to improve the recoverability of their products. And consumers get stuck with eco fees. We're simply passing on costs without creating incentives for better outcomes

This government has not advanced or progressed at all on waste management, and we notice. When we look at other jurisdictions like Nova Scotia, Ontario's waste

diversion rates within the industrial, commercial and institutional sectors are lagging. There are significant economic opportunities and environmental benefits from waste reduction, reuse and recycling. I say those words like I've heard them a thousand times from my children. They learn the benefits of recycling, reusing and reducing at a very early stage.

Every time I come home on weekends, I tell the boys: "You're coming from downstairs? Close the lights," and they always close them. Well, not really. I have to remind them: "Close your game. Shut the TV off. Turn the light off in the washroom." If you do this action, it's repetitive. But one of the things they have been participating in is one they remind me of when I go to the washroom and either brush my teeth or shave: "Dad, turn off the water," or "Dad, that cap on the pop bottle can go in the plastic." They're really engaged in the recycling program, and they remind me of my duties.

I remember a time when you used to grab that plastic bottle, throw it in the garbage can and just walk away, whereas now you get a sense that, "Hey, I just did something wrong," so you go back to the garbage can, pull that plastic bottle out and put it in the blue bin like you're supposed to. It's part of our DNA now, and part of my family's. The younger generation seems to have learned this; however, this government has not.

I've been down at the Ontario Good Roads Association and Rural Ontario Municipal Association meetings, as many of you have over the course of the last few days. I am in constant contact and regular communication with all the mayors and councillors of Algoma-Manitoulin. I have heard from them and have also heard from stakeholders across my riding.

We know that the Ontario Waste Management Association has expressed broad support for Bill 151 but cautions about potential issues that could emerge as details are ironed out. Rob Cook, the CEO of OWMA, says, "This is an important step forward for the province today in embracing the move towards a circular economy, which will improve resource efficiency, reduce our environmental footprint, increase productivity, create local jobs and foster economic growth." He goes on to say, "The waste/resource management sector remains one of the best kept secrets to driving emission reductions and we are pleased the government is acknowledging this."

So we know this. We are hearing from the experts. We need to ensure that this government legislation is actually going to deal with the current problems and create positive change.

I also meet regularly with the Association of Municipalities of Ontario. The Association of Municipalities of Ontario has long advocated for extended producer responsibility for waste diversion programs. As I mentioned before when speaking about many discussions with municipalities in my riding of Algoma-Manitoulin, AMO has been concerned about rising costs to municipalities, imposed on them by industry-funded organizations that find ways to avoid paying their traditional 50% share of the cost. We know that AMO would wel-

come legislation that would shift these responsibilities and costs to producers, but it notes that the actual effect of this act will depend on regulations, and that transition is estimated to take about three to five years.

Environmental Defence and Toronto Environmental Alliance have said that they "welcome the strategy for a waste-free Ontario and are very pleased to see Ontario making the explicit link between waste and climate change and committing to a vision for a circular economy where Ontario produces zero waste."

Again, of course they welcome this. Who wouldn't? But what we want is to see something actually happen. For 13 years, there has been no progress.

The Ontario Federation of Agriculture, in a statement, said, "OFA applauds the waste-free Ontario initiative proposed in Bill 151," noting that one objective of the act is "to reduce waste, and reduce the province's dependency on landfills that are typically located in rural areas."

I meet with these folks often, as well, up north. We know that the cities want to ship their garbage up north—not just garbage; we are closely monitoring and watching what is happening with the nuclear waste discussion. That's a different story, but the premise is the same: again, garbage coming up north. Northern and rural areas are hosts to the waste of the larger urban areas.

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The OFA also noted that much will depend on subsequent regulations: "We don't want to be surprised by any unintended consequences impacting Ontario farm businesses. Ontario farmers already participate in recycling programs that involve the recycling of pesticide and fertilizer containers, feed, seed and pesticide bags, plastic bale wrap and many other items used on the farm. Expansion of those programs will be an important development under the proposed act."

Some of my friends over at the Workers Health and Safety Centre whom I speak with on a regular basis in regard to mining issues are hopeful that Bill 151 will result in fewer hazardous materials in the waste stream, noting that while the Toxics Reduction Act requires monitoring and reduction plans, the implementation of these plans is not mandatory.

I'm coming to the end of my notes here this morning. This is a very large bill, a very comprehensive bill. We need to put some meat into this bill because that's what a lot of people across this province are asking for. There's a lot of content in this bill. We need not waste our time anymore with talking about this issue. We need to really address the waste problem that we have.

I think the intentions of the government are good, but, again, I call this government to go into action because their actions are going to be stronger than words. We've got to get this right. My kids are depending on me to get this right. Ontarians are depending on all of us in this room to get this right. We have an opportunity; let's put some meat on the bones and let's make sure that what we do with this bill is not just, once again, another splash and another title that we see in the media that sounds real good but really accomplishes very little.

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

Hon. Michael Gravelle: I cannot resist having an opportunity to respond to my colleague from across the floor, my good friend the member for Algoma-Manitoulin. He referenced the Rural Ontario Municipal Association/Good Roads conference. Like my colleague, I was there for the last two and a half or three days. I met with scores of municipal delegations—it was tremendous—many within the member's riding as well.

What probably needs to be said as well—not referencing specifically the legislation at this very moment—is how optimistic and positive municipal leaders are all across the province about the opportunities that they see moving forward. That's really what that gathering is about: How can we continue to help move the economy forward and deal with issues such as this?

May I say also, specifically related to Bill 151, that while I heard the member's feelings and belief that indeed we need to perhaps provide some amendments, which I'm sure the party will be providing, what I did hear was an overall support for this very important legislation. The fact is that Ontario is showing leadership by taking action to support what we're describing, I think, as a circular economy. That's really, really important.

There is significant stakeholder support for Bill 151, and I'm very pleased that the member for Algoma-Manitoulin is supporting it as well. I know he isn't necessarily speaking on behalf of all the members of the opposition—but we think this is a very important piece of legislation.

May I say, too, that the member referenced how often he and I worked together on a number of issues for each of his communities. That is certainly the case related even to this specific issue. We haven't always been successful, but we work in a positive way all the time to try and improve the communities that both he and I represent, and all across the province of Ontario. I thank him for his comments.

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

Mr. Todd Smith: It's a pleasure to offer some comments on those offered by the member from Algoma-Manitoulin. We often get accused of being the same person by legislative security here. I don't know which one is more handsome. I would suggest it's probably the member from the NDP.

He did bring up some very, very good points in his remarks this morning about the fact that not much has changed when it comes to recycling levels in the province of Ontario. In spite of the fact that the current government continues to announce that they're doing more, nothing ever seems to get done. I think recycling levels back in 2004 were at 26% in the province of Ontario, right around the same place that the Premier's approval ratings are at right now—about 26%. But they haven't increased over that time, in spite of all of the talk that we'd heard from various ministers of the crown on how they were going to improve recycling.

Now they've brought forward this bill. It's a good initiative, but there are some items in there that we have serious concerns about. Do we really need to create a team of recycling cops in the province of Ontario? Do we need to create more bureaucracy? We would argue that we need to strip away Waste Diversion Ontario and the bureaucracy that exists there, and allow industry to battle this out on their own. We believe that businesses can advance innovation far quicker than what a government could do. We've seen that in the past. This government, anyway, certainly hasn't been able to advance the markers on this. We believe that if we set the targets, industry will meet them. There's money in this game; there's a lot of money in recycling, and we think there's an opportunity here for businesses to take advantage of that.

All in all, the main point I took away from the member from Algoma-Manitoulin is that we have heard promise after promise after promise, whether it's about recycling or the Ring of Fire, or many other things. They just don't deliver on their promises.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: I'm pleased to join the debate this morning. I thank my colleague from Algoma-Manitoulin.

The concept around this bill, as it relates to a circular economy, is something that should be applauded. It's a novel concept; it's one that I think our economy in general has to move towards. It brings us even further beyond sustainability to an economy that is regenerative. It's something that supports—and has triple net benefits.

This is really complex stuff through an economic system. It really is as sort of simplistic as recycling as we know it. There's garbage in and you recycle it, you retain it, you turn it back into something that can be produced in another fashion and divert that waste from our landfills. We obviously understand that concept, but as it relates to an economy, that's where it gets a lot more complex.

Unfortunately, what we have before us today, for viewers who are tuning in at home, is simply enabling legislation. What that means, to folks that are tuning in, is that it gives the government the legislative ability and framework to, in the future, do something regarding this issue. It's pretty basic stuff; it's not really visionary. It doesn't give a whole lot of details. It doesn't give any targets. It simply says, "This is something that we think we should move towards," and we will applaud the government on that front. However, as legislators, our job is to criticize and scrutinize the mechanics of the bills that are put before the House from the government, and unfortunately, it's difficult to do that because we don't really have any.

Therefore, we look forward to further discussion and a whole lot more consultation, especially when it comes to municipalities, which certainly have borne the brunt of failures in waste diversion in the province for quite some time.

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

Mrs. Amrit Mangat: I'm pleased to speak to Bill 151. As the member from Algoma–Manitoulin said, in my remarks I said that in the residential sector, 47% of household waste is diverted from the landfill. I made those comments in the light that it's very clear that more needs to be done.

I would like to point out that the Ontario Liberal government—it doesn't matter if it was in 1980 or since 2003 to now—they have always shown leadership when it comes to environmental issues. We all know that Ontario was the first jurisdiction to introduce the Blue Box Program, and it was done under the leadership of a well-regarded member of our caucus and cabinet, the member from St. Catharines, the Honourable James Bradley. Even our current Minister of the Environment and Climate Change, Mr. Glen Murray, is very passionate about fighting climate change. Our leader, our Premier, the Honourable Kathleen Wynne, is also very much committed to reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

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So you can see there's whole a lot of leadership and there is a broad range of support for this bill. To name a few companies: Unilever, Loblaws, the Canadian Beverage Association, Dell Canada, Tetra Pak Canada and USA, the Ontario Waste Management Association, the Association of Municipalities of Ontario, and the Ontario Federation of Agriculture, which represents 36,000 family farm businesses—they all support this bill.

Last week, when I was watching television, there was news on CP24 that Ikea, a Sweden-based company, is soon going to announce that if you buy a product from their store and bring it back at the end of the life, you will get store credit. So—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Thank you. Your time is up.

Mrs. Amrit Mangat: —all of the companies are moving in that direction—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Thank you. When I say thank you, you sit down.

The member from Algoma–Manitoulin has two minutes.

Mr. Michael Mantha: I want to thank my good friend—I always refer to him as a friend—the Minister of Northern Development and Mines. We've often discussed that if it was left to us as far as setting up and fixing things across northern Ontario, we would probably get some stuff done. Unfortunately, he has to report back to someone else, and it kind of prevents things from moving forward.

The one thing that he did quote on is what we heard over at OGRA/ROMA: optimistic and positive comments coming from municipalities. I also heard quite a few questions and some concerns that are coming from them as well, and I hope you heard those issues as well while there.

The member from Prince Edward–Hastings: You pretty well hit the nail on the head as far as the points that I was trying to bring across—the actions, or the inactions of this government, the costs and the fees, and the fact

that we keep hearing promises of deliverance, and there is nothing that is happening. I'll leave it to the viewers to determine who's most handsome between you and me this morning. Anyway, we'll leave it at that.

My good friend the member from Essex, it's always a privilege to be in the House with you. You talked about the circular economy—absolutely. This is something that we need to see come into action. That's essentially what we're calling for from this government. This is enabling legislation, and we see no directive, we see no timeline and we see no targets. We don't see how you're going to be doing this. We see the grandiose idea, but there is no action.

The member from Mississauga–Brampton South: I hear your words. I hear you talking about the Premier, I hear you talking about the minister. But those are words; actions will speak a lot more. That's what Ontarians are asking for and that's what has been lacking. We haven't seen any action. We've seen more promises and more media releases, good-news stories, and no action from this government.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate? The Minister of Northern Development and Mines.

Hon. Michael Gravelle: Thank you very much.

Applause.

Hon. Michael Gravelle: Oh, my God, that's very kind of you. Even a standing ovation, Speaker, from the other side—very nice.

I'm glad to have had an opportunity to join this debate. I think what's really clear from the discussion this morning and the debate this morning, and other debate that's taken place, is that this is a very important subject; there's just no question about it. I think, actually, the quality of the debate this morning as well reflects the fact there's an understanding of how complex it is. I was listening to the member for Essex and his two-minute response and was conscious of exactly what he said: This is really complex.

I hear everything that's being said about our desire, all of us, to do this better—because we need to do exactly that. Again, I get the impression that we're going to have support for this legislation, as we all have a desire to move forward and find some solutions.

The bottom line is, from our perspective, and I think it's a fair perspective, that we are showing leadership by taking action to support what we're describing as a circular economy, a system where ultimately nothing is wasted.

Oh, and by the way, Speaker, I apologize, if I may—and I hope I get permission for this. I'm sharing my time with the member for Ottawa–Orléans—I know it's dodgy—and the Chair of Cabinet, even though I know they wouldn't mind if I spoke for the entire 20 minutes.

Mrs. Amrit Mangat: No.

Hon. Michael Gravelle: Are you speaking? Have I got the wrong member? We're good. Ottawa–Orléans—have I got an okay for that, Speaker?

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Thank you. That might have been good if you had done it at the beginning, but that's okay. And thank you to everyone for giving you permission.

Hon. Michael Gravelle: Of course, Speaker, you've got to give me permission for that, so thank you very much. I didn't want to forget that. I think that's another reflection of what an important debate this is.

The proposed legislation, as the members know, requires the Minister of the Environment and Climate Change to develop and maintain the Waste Free Ontario: Building the Circular Economy strategy. I'm sitting beside the parliamentary assistant to the minister, who I know knows this incredibly well. A draft strategy was of course released when the proposed Waste-Free Ontario Act was introduced this past November, and it really and truly does provide a road map. I think we do need that road map to support that circular economy.

The strategy was clearly developed in response to what we heard from people all across Ontario. That speaks to my colleague from Algoma-Manitoulin, as well. And yes, indeed, while we're all working towards positive things, we have our challenges as well. I did hear those things at our meetings that we held.

We certainly heard from people related to this particular legislation about the need to have clear Ontario goals to support that economy—the need to take actions to increase diversion, and the need to measure our progress in achieving those goals. So that draft strategy outlines very clearly, actually, Ontario's goals, which I believe we all share: zero waste in the province and zero greenhouse gas emissions from the waste sector.

The draft strategy is obviously a crucial element in terms of detailing the key actions that will support Ontario's vision and goals, including establishing clear provincial direction, expanding producers' responsibilities for their products and packaging, diverting more waste from disposal, increasing promotion and education, and stimulating markets for recovered materials. The strategy also sets out a series of performance measures, so we will know what is working and where improvements are needed.

So this legislation is pretty important. It will require the Minister of the Environment and Climate Change to prepare progress reports at least once every five years, outlining actions taken to achieve the strategy's goals. So those targets will be very much in place. In addition, there is a requirement that the strategy be reviewed at least every 10 years in consultation with stakeholders and the public, and it would be amended as needed. This will very much keep Ontario's actions current, and it will also align our efforts with our key partners.

The key thing that I think needs to be said about this legislation—the important element to it that everyone in this House agrees on is that by enshrining the strategy in legislation and by requiring regular reporting and reviews, the government will be making the strategy an ongoing, inclusive and transparent mechanism to direct actions to support a circular economy for the long term.

Mr. Speaker, I'm grateful to have an opportunity to say a few words, and I'll pass it off, if I may, to my colleague from Ottawa-Orléans.

Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde: I'm very proud to rise today to speak about Bill 151, the Waste-Free Ontario Act.

Ontario is an incubator of innovation, one that has become not only a leader but an advocate for a circular economy. Just to say what a circular economy is for the folks watching out there: It works to ensure that absolutely nothing goes to waste. Valuable materials that are destined for landfills are instead put back into the economy without negative effects on people or the environment. That is why we have brought forth the Waste-Free Ontario Act.

Ontario's need for clear and concise goals to support a circular economy, increase diversion and measure progress are all mandates given to us by the people of Ontario. That is why I'm honoured to stand today in support of the Waste-Free Ontario Act. Like Ontarians, I want a clear and radiant Ontario, one that yields zero waste and zero GHG emissions; an Ontario that reduces, reuses and recycles, helps mitigate negative effects and keeps waste that would go into landfills out.

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The bill, if passed, would give the Minister of the Environment and Climate Change the authority to conduct reports at least once every five years which seek to outline the actions taken to achieve the strategy's goals. This is a continuation of our commitment to a government that strives for ultimate transparency.

The achievements of our existing program, which has been designed to keep waste out of landfills, are some of the broadest and most comprehensive in North America. However, these cover only 15% of Ontario's waste stream. We aim to increase this number and do better. This is why the government brought forward this bill. Over eight million tonnes of waste is sent to landfills each year and this represents an estimated \$1 billion worth of recoverable materials lost. We would be missing a huge opportunity to generate revenue and create jobs. A 60% recovery rate of materials would generate 13,000 jobs and contribute \$1.5 billion in GDP to Ontario. For businesses, this bill would provide them with the incentive to design long-lasting, reusable and easily recyclable products.

The new ways of reducing waste will also help reduce greenhouse gas emissions that result from landfilling. Working with businesses would be in conjunction with the government's strategy to preserve resources and recover valuable materials from waste lost to landfills. It would also mean a continuation of our commitment to an all-inclusive government.

The public has expressed significant concern on eco fees. Under the current Waste Diversion Act, 2002, mandatory industry funding organizations, or IFOs, have set uniform fees. This bill, if passed, would eliminate the IFOs and the uniform fees that were set by these organizations. Under the proposed legislation, there would be

an open, fair and competitive marketplace that would discourage producers from charging eco fees. But if producers do pass the cost of recycling to the consumers, this would have to follow the rules set out in the Consumer Protection Act.

There are many members in this House who are devoted to the cause of climate change. It is great to see that many here understand that it is vital that we take the necessary action to manage our resources and ultimately preserve our environment.

I hope everyone here will support this bill. Today we are one step closer to a clean Ontario.

I would like to share the rest of my time with the member from St. Catharines.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The Chair of Cabinet and minister without portfolio.

Hon. James J. Bradley: I'm pleased that this bill is where it is at the present time, although I must say it has been a long time getting to this stage.

There are people out there who are observers of political process who are great fans of minority government. Indeed, from time to time, minority government can produce some beneficial results. I must say, however, in the instance of this particular bill, minority government did not work well, largely because one of the opposition parties was intent upon making sure this bill did not pass no matter what changes were proposed, no matter what was said.

From my perspective of being the former Minister of the Environment who first introduced legislation of this kind, I can't recall a piece of legislation that had more consultation than this piece of legislation has had over the years. I can recall meeting personally the members of the ministry and, certainly, committees heard from people. We heard from a variety of people about what should go in a bill of this kind. I think everyone recognized the need for it.

While household recycling has been quite good in the province of Ontario—in other words, you and I in our homes have put things into the blue box and other containers that our municipality allows or suggests that we do so—the industrial and commercial sector, the business sector, was not as good at recycling and recovery and so, as a result, we need this legislation.

Former Environmental Commissioner Gord Miller was instrumental in promoting the need for this legislation through reports that he provided to the Legislature. Indeed, in a somewhat different role, he actually intervened, which is unusual for an Environmental Commissioner, in a very positive way to try to bring the various parties—that's with a small "p," not political parties, although you could say the political parties as well, but the various stakeholders—together to try to develop a consensus. And indeed, we had this.

I will say that the New Democratic Party, the third party in the House, I think was prepared to see the bill proceed through not only the Legislature but legislative committees. The official opposition saw in it reasons to block it from proceeding through the House, and some

are legitimate concerns that are expressed; I'd like to concede that. But I could tell you one thing: We had incorporated ideas from all political parties, including those which were proposed by the official opposition, but it became a moving target. As soon as you addressed one issue that they were satisfied with, they went after another issue.

Now, that's part of the process. In a majority government, there's a better opportunity to move legislation through the House, though I was really hopeful in this case, because I saw interest in all three parties in the House. I was hopeful that that legislation could move forward with the acquiescence, if not the enthusiastic support, of all three parties in the Legislature, but it just got blocked constantly. And there were people out there, who previously would have been annoyed with and considered to be an inconvenience legislation of this kind, who were supportive of it, who ultimately decided that it was needed.

There are many components to this that are very significant. It's interesting that when you bring things to a sanitary landfill—I sound like a former environment minister; now everybody calls it the dump, they don't call it a sanitary landfill. When you bring things to the sanitary landfill, there are not many jobs created in that. There are a lot more jobs that are created through the three Rs of recycling, reuse. I can tell you those jobs are jobs for some people who would not have another job in our society.

I was encouraged to see the private sector moving forward into businesses which indicated you could make money on waste.

The first thing you want to do is make sure you don't create the waste in the first place. Second, you want to reuse it if you possibly can—and some of our ancestors knew how to reuse things very much. I can remember pillowcases which were made from old flour bags and things of that nature. People were quite innovative in those days, I am told by my grandparents.

I think there's a lot that can be done with these materials, so it's great to see businesses that are developing out there to address this issue. They saw an opportunity and are moving forward. But there was a need for legislation for what we call a level playing field. That's what business looks for. When you're dealing with these kinds of matters, first of all, don't surprise them. They want to know what you're going to do, and will you consult—because very often the role of government is not to specifically tell somebody how to achieve goals but, rather, to set those goals or those rules, if you will, and then have them use their own ingenuity in achieving them.

There are some very creative businesspeople out there. I toured many of the plants, I must say, many of the operations out there when I was minister. There was a lot of enthusiasm for this piece of legislation. I was hopeful that it would have passed some time ago because it now means the better part of two years have gone by before this legislation is implemented.

It's interesting that over eight million tonnes of waste is sent to landfills every year. That is a sign of "not success," let's put it that way. That represents approximately \$1 billion worth of recoverable materials lost to landfills in Canada.

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The proposed Waste-Free Ontario Act, if passed by this Legislature, would be the pillar of our government's strategy to preserve resources and recover valuable materials from waste currently lost to landfill. Under the proposed approach, producers would be fully responsible for recovering the resources and reducing the waste associated with their products and packaging. This would provide business with the incentive to design long-lasting, reusable and easily recyclable products that are never discarded or sent to a landfill. Finding ways to reduce waste and reintroduce resources into the economy, we recognize, would reduce greenhouse gas emissions that result from landfilling.

As I indicated, about 47% of Ontario's residential waste is diverted from disposal. The real challenge, certainly, is in the industrial, commercial and institutional sectors that, at this time, divert about 13%, which is simply not satisfactory.

I look back with a good deal of interest on the blue box, because when I was Minister of the Environment back in 1985, I recall that there were some communities out there that had decided that the blue box looked like a good idea. Indeed, it was, and one of my goals at that time—and the goal of the government and, I think, the goal of the Legislature—was to see the Blue Box Program right across the province of Ontario. So we implemented the program, indeed, right across Ontario.

It was interesting watching, in the early days, children teaching adults how to divert waste. An adult would go to throw something in the garbage and often a fairly young child, aged nine or 10, might say to the adult, "No, that goes in the blue box." Now we have a number of different containers that enable people to not throw things in a landfill but have them used in a different way. I think that's very positive.

One side story that I want to tell: Students ask us if they can have any influence on the government process or political process. I remember a girl who was a student at Grantham High School. She wrote to me and said, "This Blue Box Program is great, but we don't have it in schools." As a result of that letter to me in my capacity as Minister of the Environment, we developed a program called STAR, Student Action for Recycling. To this day, I'm grateful to that girl who took the opportunity to write about that. I think it's a lesson for all out there that when good ideas come forward, if governments are smart, they will certainly proceed with those ideas.

I think the framework is here. Members have mentioned that there's a regulatory framework yet to come, and I hope we have input from everybody on that regulatory framework. I think this is a very progressive piece of legislation that, if passed by this Legislature, all members of the Legislature can be proud of.

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

Mr. Rick Nicholls: It's always entertaining and I always enjoy listening to the deputy House leader and the minister without portfolio.

Just to clarify things, we will, in fact, be supporting the bill, but we will be advocating for some changes. Of course, you may not want to hear some of our changes, but I'd just like to establish four of them in which we firmly believe—because we have been advocates, as well, for the Waste-Free Ontario Act.

First of all, we think that there needs to be established a clear legislative time frame to eliminate every single—brace yourself—Liberal eco tax program.

Secondly, we need to scrap the Liberal's eco tax agency, the worst—that was a Freudian slip—the Waste Diversion Ontario.

Thirdly, we also feel that we need to drop all the plans to create a force of local waste cops to police recycling bins and garbage cans across the province.

Lastly—yes, it's been a big issue—red tape: We need to cut a lot of the red tape that we believe, on this side, as the official opposition, increases costs for Ontarians and, of course, impedes the environmental protection in our province.

These changes, we feel, will protect Ontario's taxpayers and, of course, our environment as well.

We as PCs have long championed the plan to increase recycling and to reduce waste through innovation and competition among businesses in the private sector. Our plan, of course, would be very measurable and would set recycling targets for businesses, establish environmental standards and enforce the rules.

Those are some of the key elements we feel need to be incorporated to improve this bill.

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

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: As I was listening to the debate, the minister without portfolio talked about children and about teaching the next generation, learning from children, and about the letter that was written to him and how that made a lot of sense.

I think what makes a lot of sense is that we need to educate the public at large, and especially our children, so that they can educate the adults. When it comes from kids, for some reason, we do pay attention to what they say because really, they have the right idea, and there's no wrong intention when a child expresses an idea or an opinion about something. So congratulations to that young girl who wrote to the minister. He acted upon it because it was the right thing to do.

We're talking about the Waste-Free Ontario Act, Bill 151, today. Many members have talked about how there's a vision here. We all agree with that vision. We all agree with a green Ontario. We all agree with conservation. People actually want to conserve; they want a better environment for the next generation. But we do have concerns. A lot of this bill, as we've talked about, is left up to regulation, and there are no timelines. So it

would be interesting, once that actually all happens—it would be great to have it come back here and let's see what it actually looks like.

I do want to ask this government, though—they're talking about a waste-free Ontario, and they're also mentioning the garbage, 750,000 tonnes a year, that we have in Ontario, but the Ministry of Energy is also talking about incineration. I'd like to have some clarification on why we're discussing a waste-free Ontario but then talking about incineration. Incineration does not help the pollutants in the air; there are many studies about that. If anyone could respond to that later in the debate, I'd really appreciate it.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments? The member from Brampton South-Mississauga.

Mrs. Amrit Mangat: Mississauga-Brampton South, Mr. Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Oh, I'm sorry.

Mrs. Amrit Mangat: It's okay; it happens. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It's a privilege to speak to Bill 151. It's quite remarkable that when the bill was developed, we received a lot of support from the retail and producer sector. What we heard from people across Ontario was very clear that that transition to the existing programs should be in an orderly fashion and smooth.

Bill 151 would be based on four principles: (1) the government would lead the overall transition process; (2) each program would have a customized transition process; (3) there would be huge stakeholder consultations; and (4) the Blue Box Program should not be interrupted at all.

Bill 151 would allow existing waste diversion programs to continue until they are transitioned to the new one. This bill will facilitate the smooth transition of all the existing waste diversion programs to a new producer responsibility model.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Thank you to the member from Brampton South-Mississauga.

Mrs. Amrit Mangat: Mississauga-Brampton South.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): I'm sorry about that. It's a major problem.

The member from Dufferin-Caledon.

Ms. Sylvia Jones: Or Caledon-Dufferin; whatever you prefer, Speaker, because you're in charge.

I wanted to speak very specifically about ICI—industrial, commercial and institutional—because there seems to be a bit of a whipping happening in the ICI sector: the suggestion that they are not doing an effective job of recycling.

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I'm going to tell you a very brief story. I am very closely involved with some municipalities that are trying to proactively do a lot of recycling. I'm sure most of us are familiar with household hazardous waste days in our various municipalities. It is, in fact, not available to our ICI sector. Even things that are not part of their manu-

facturing process—fluorescent tubes, printer cartridges, old computers—they are not allowed to bring it into the household hazardous waste days. I think that would be a very simple and easy solution. If you want to bump up your numbers and have that 25% number finally get a little higher, you should start looking at allowing ICI to put in, not the stuff that they're using for their manufacturing—but just the fact that they are part of the municipality, paying their taxes, and yet still cannot participate in household hazardous waste. It's a very easy fix.

In the example that I was trying to help, they were actually told, "Those fluorescent tubes, you're not allowed to take them to the household hazardous waste," even though you could as a homeowner. "Just break them and throw them in the garbage." What kind of message are we sending to our ICI sector, who are proactively trying to recycle and trying to get this stuff back into the stream, when we're saying, "Because you're ICI, we don't want your stuff"? It's a terrible message to send.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): One of the three speakers has two minutes.

Hon. James J. Bradley: I appreciate the comments and suggestions that have been offered by those from all three political parties in the House.

There was one reference made to incineration. At one time, they used to talk about the four Rs. Up until the mid-1980s, they talked about the four Rs. They would say, "Well, the best one is going to be 'reduce,'" so you don't produce waste in the first place. The second R, after you reduce, is how can you reuse the product completely? That's what many of our ancestors were able to do with some success. The third was "recycle," and the fourth they referred to as "recovery." Recovery was removed from that, with a good deal of justification, because it wasn't really fitting the category of diversion.

Now, there have been very few examples of incineration in recent years. I can recall being in a court case in the city of Detroit where I had to answer on behalf of Ontario because we were objecting to an incinerator in Detroit which was going to use electrostatic precipitators instead of scrubber baghouse technology. In the court, the authority that wanted to put this in tried to say that Ontario did not have clean hands, but in fact, any new incineration process in Ontario would have to use scrubber baghouse technology. So we ended up being part of that particular case.

It was the first time I'd ever been in a court. Mr. Speaker, the judge actually says, "You must answer the question." I had been a cabinet minister, recognizing that you don't always give a definitive answer to questions in the House, and here I was before the court being compelled to give a very definitive answer. It was a shocking situation for me.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate? The member from Stormont-Dundas-South Glengarry. Did I get that right?

Mr. Jim McDonell: You got it right. It's a first. Maybe not you, Speaker. I'm just a little rattled because

they were talking about being forced to tell the truth on the other side.

It's a pleasure to stand up and offer remarks on Bill 151, an attempt by this government to bring Ontario to levels of recycling and waste diversion that we see in other provinces and jurisdictions.

Ontario's stuck in a situation where only a quarter of the recyclable materials are actually diverted from landfill. Much of the blame for this failure rests on the shoulders of this government, who have burdened municipalities and recyclers with red tape while ignoring the facts.

Recycling and landfilling are two faces of the same coin—turning one person's waste into revenue. In the case of recycling, it's a question of collecting waste that has a residual value to it, converting it into a form that can be sold for reprocessing, and delivering it to a customer. For landfilling, you would add steps to ensure that recyclable waste is removed to maximize this expensive resource.

It is absolutely important to highlight that neither of these processes is free. There is a cost involved at each and every step, including capital costs, such as property, machinery and warehousing, and operating costs such as insurance, labour, hydro, marketing and machine fuel. You can't look at waste diversion and recycling exclusively through the lens of the Waste Diversion Act or other waste-related legislation. It is an economic ecosystem operating in an environment where commodity prices, including those for recycled materials, are volatile and where government policy can make or break a business.

In my own riding, I visited a large landfill site. When I compare it back to our own township, they were looking at receiving—they use methane to produce some electricity. There was an excess of gas. Any of that gas, they were forced to flare off. They would like to use that for electricity. It would make sense. It's a carbon that goes into the atmosphere, which is something we're trying to cut back. They couldn't get permission from this government—it was taking months and years—to develop more electricity. You could say, "Well, maybe we don't need the electricity," but, at the same time, we're setting up 300 windmills in the same township for electricity.

Now, the flaring off, and the gas—you can control the time of use to some extent. You would be able to produce this when the costs are highest or, I guess, when the electricity is in demand, as opposed to the windmills that produce all the time and they're buying the power whether they need it or not. There's a clear example of a step this government could take to actually lower their electricity rates and get rid of carbon.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): I would ask the member to stick to the bill. You're off onto hydro and turbines. That's not really about waste diversion. Can you get back to that, please?

Mr. Jim McDonnell: Thanks, Speaker. I'll get back to it.

I guess it is all about our local landfill site that is having some problems. Really, their job is to reduce the

amount of waste they have—the recycling. They also had a great program where they had a falcon that was used to keep the seagulls down—a pet falcon that they were very proud of. It was a requirement of the government. Something that was interesting: In their own landfills—we have a number of them at the municipal level—that was not something that was required.

It just speaks to how there are many other regulations that could be in place that would actually develop an integrated plan. The waste management is part of it, but also what's left; there's more to divert. In this case here, the methane gas could easily have been diverted, but we have somebody who's waiting for permission. The application is there, but, of course, it's waiting to be acted on.

There is a market for post-consumer goods that are ready to return into the economy. However, the trend over the past two years has seen prices tumble. Here are some examples: The composite index for scrap metals has dropped by 36% in the last two years; the index for waste paper lost about 12% since its 2015 peak; tire and rubber is down 14% over the past two years; and recycled plastics are down 6%.

These price decreases can only mean two things: It can become uneconomical to collect recycling, or, at least, it will become uneconomical to produce the materials for reuse. This market doesn't follow the dynamics of the public sector where shortfalls can be covered by taxpayers' dollars. If a recycled material processor can't make money, they simply close down. It stands to reason that these commodity prices are as susceptible to the end of the commodity super-cycle as any other raw material, which means that the lower prices may be here to stay. If and when the world's worst recyclers catch up with us, and maybe even overtake us, we can expect the current price of post-consumer materials worldwide to fall even further. It is an elementary question of supply and demand.

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There are, of course, two approaches the government can take in a situation where business profitability and jobs in the green economy are at stake. Governments can, as the Liberals have done on many occasions, intervene by picking winners and losers and attempting to direct the recycling market, usually without giving much consideration to global market demands. In doing so, governments utilize a one-size-fits-all approach that ignores local factors, such as the cost of collecting waste or the proximity to a processing facility or final markets. One of the main end-users—manufacturing—has been decimated by similar failed policies of this government. This particular course of action is favoured by governments that treasure photo opportunities and feel-good initiatives above sustainable and effective public policy. It inevitably results in the inefficient use of local and national resources.

Bill 151 is the perfect example of this kind of bad policy-making. Out of the provisions of this bill, the Liberal government intends to create a system whereby they can write a policy statement and impose its obli-

gations on industry. It is unclear what particular aspects of the waste cycle the policy statements will affect and how the government intends to enforce them. To be honest, the public doesn't even know whether the Liberals will write any policy statements at all. Once a policy statement comes from the ministry, however, the government intends to apply its principles to all industries and expects them all to comply. This direction might include specific requirements for packaging, labelling and distribution and affect the other steps in the supply chain and the waste cycle.

This particular made-in-Ontario approach could have a logical justification, if most goods Ontarians consumed were made in Ontario and our market could use its size to force producers to adapt to our standards. This, however, is not the case. According to the Ministry of Finance's January data sheet, in 2014 the province imported \$356 billion worth of goods and services and exported \$370 billion. Overall, we have an affluent and sizable consumer market, especially within a Canadian context. Zooming out to just our NAFTA partners, however, reveals that our market size is smaller than the US states of California, New York, Florida and Texas. We can't compete with the purchasing power of the 300 million neighbours south of our border.

In 2014, our province imported, according to Statistics Canada, \$295 billion in merchandise. Our imports constitute a large proportion of our GDP, since consumer spending on imports is included in the GDP calculation. The government of Ontario expects to force multinational companies to comply with the Ontario requirements for the sake of selling in our market. Depending on how detailed and onerous these requirements are, we could be looking at a tailored, made-in-Ontario regulatory framework for everything from packaging to distribution. Some companies may be dependent on Ontario consumption and will comply, although I don't expect that to be a very large number. For many others, Ontario's massive red tape and unrealistic directives will warrant an examination of whether it's worthwhile to continue to supply their products to our markets or, at the very least, raise prices above those of our neighbours to pay for the new scheme.

There can be three outcomes when a company undertakes such a step. First, they can choose to dedicate a supply line to Ontario-compliant products different from their larger supply lines to other markets. This is far from a victory, as it diverts resources and creates additional costs in terms of labour, space and expertise to ensure continued compliance.

Second, the company can decide to pull out of the Ontario market altogether and mitigate their losses through more effective marketing in either the markets that they already have a presence in or in attempting to enter new markets.

Third, the company can spin off an Ontario-centred subsidiary designed exclusively to comply with the ministry's policy statements. This arrangement, again, misallocates resources by adding incorporation, labour,

transportation and compliance costs to the supply chain, driving up prices for Ontario consumers.

Last week, the Minister of the Environment and the Premier of Saskatchewan had a bit of a fight over the new carbon-based pricing, where they said that it was an unfair advantage if they were forced to follow through on this. This is an example of somebody that's interested in our competitiveness with our neighbouring province that really doesn't compete with us in any way. We don't sell oil, basically; we don't have potash. So we're not worrying about the bigger picture, which is our neighbour to the south that really competes with us in manufacturing, and we aren't competitive. We need to look at the red tape. It really is an example of a minister who is worried about one small sector of the economy but he's not worried about the overall.

I guess, Speaker, you're giving me the wave that this is the time to sit down and continue another day. Thank you.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

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

The House recessed from 1015 to 1030.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I know what's going to happen. I'm going to ask for all members' indulgence as there is a large number of people who want to stand up to introduce guests because of the circumstances that we find ourselves in today. I'm going to ask you to do the introduction without any editorial, and we will get through all of your guests. My intention would be to remind members that the Speaker usually introduces former members.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mrs. Julia Munro: It gives me great pleasure to recognize Subahini Srikantha, who is here from my riding for the model Parliament reception.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: I'm pleased to welcome some friends from my region of Essex: Mayor Ron McDermott; Bill Parr; Arlene Parr; Councillor Bill Caixeiro; Sheri Dzudovich; Rebecca Robinson; Joann Myer; Ethan Robinson; and Melanie Paul Tanovich. They're here today to fight the closure of Harrow high school. They braved the weather to come up. We appreciate them being here.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I want to welcome the civic engagement volunteering activities club from my riding of Don Valley West. I just want to read their names: Dario Mendez; Aadil Shaikh; Will Randall; Ian Hayward; Mia Tucker; Amelia Lin; Nelka Jankechova; Olivia Lasanowski; Riane Jin-Hee Lee; Sanjay Suganthan; Catherine Chen; Angie Luo; Hana Hadley; Rachel Quon; Kaafi Hamid; Heather Coyne; Rie Montgomery; Rick Mahoney; and Devin Swann.

These are very engaged volunteers in Don Valley West, and we welcome them.

Mr. Michael Harris: I'd like to welcome the public affairs students from Seneca College, taught by my good

friend Professor Jon Olinski, to question period this morning.

Miss Monique Taylor: I'd like to welcome a student who's here from my riding for the Ontario model Parliament: Seamus McKenna. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. Bob Delaney: I'm pleased to welcome some members of our Ontario oil and gas sector: Hugh Moran, executive director of the Ontario Petroleum Institute; David Thompson, the chief executive officer of Northern Cross; Frank Kuri from Dundee Energy; David McLean, the president of Riverbend Consulting; and geologist Ian Colquhoun. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. Rick Nicholls: In the public gallery this morning, I would like to welcome, from the riding of Chatham-Kent-Essex, page Delaney Mastronardi's father, Domenic, and his mother—her grandmother, known as Nonna—Ascenzina Mastronardi. Benvenuti.

Ms. Catherine Fife: It's my pleasure to welcome Jennifer McIntyre, Suzanne Lesnowski, Lila Fraser and Alex Robinson to Queen's Park today. Welcome.

Hon. Michael Coteau: Joining us in the west gallery today is a good friend of mine, and many members of the Legislature: Bruce Davis, former chair of the Toronto District School Board and owner of Gananoque Brewing Co.

Ms. Sylvia Jones: [*inaudible*] Ryerson student working in my office, Chelsea Goberdhan.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Welcome.

Hon. Kevin Daniel Flynn: I'd like to welcome some students from Oakville who are here with us today for the 2016 Ontario model Parliament: Evangeline Mann; Henry Mann; Nicolas Scarcelli; and Alvin Leung. Please welcome them to Queen's Park.

Mr. Jim McDonell: Today, page captain Richard Fan is joined by his mother, Cherry Liu, and father, Jeffrey Fan. They're in the public gallery. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Hon. David Oraziotti: I'd like to welcome Karlee Reece, a student from my riding in Sault Ste. Marie, to the Ontario model Parliament.

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: I'd like to introduce Jason Rohfritsch, John Metzger and Will Patterson from my riding. They're here for the model Parliament.

Ms. Soo Wong: I'm very pleased to welcome my two guests who are here today to visit Queen's Park: my very good friend Ingrid Läderach Steven, the owner of the beautiful chocolate store called Swiss-Master, and Jaclyn Hawkins, who is a rising student visiting me here today at Queen's Park. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. Steve Clark: I want to welcome one of my constituents, Peyton Horning from Merrickville-Wolford, who is here for the Ontario model Parliament. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. Michael Mantha: I'd like to welcome a new intern: Irena Jury, from the Akron, Ohio, internship program.

Mrs. Cristina Martins: It gives me great pleasure to introduce today in the House Maya Joy Lindstrom Par-

kins, a student from Davenport attending today's model Parliament.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: I would like to introduce Darren Summersby, who is here from Nipissing for the model Parliament.

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I'm delighted to welcome Zachary Piette and Alexandra Pummer, who are here today for the Ontario model Parliament, representing London West.

Hon. Helena Jaczek: I'd like to introduce Alex Hu, a former page, who is here for the Ontario model Parliament for the great riding of Oak Ridges-Markham.

Mr. Monte McNaughton: I'd like to welcome Julia Brunet from my riding of Lambton-Kent-Middlesex, who is here for the model Parliament. She is also a former page here at the Legislature. Welcome, Julia.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: I'd like to welcome a former page, a member of the Windsor-Tecumseh riding. Evan Tanovich is up with the model Parliament people today. His mother, Melanie, is over here in the gallery as well.

Hon. Mitzie Hunter: It's my pleasure to welcome Dominic Jayetileke, who is from my riding of Scarborough-Guildwood, here for Ontario's model Parliament.

Speaker, if you would indulge me, please, I'd like to also welcome the Consul General of Jamaica, Mr. George Wilks, given that's the place of my birth; and also C.J. Augustine-Kanu, who is the daughter of Dr. Jean Augustine, Consul General of Grenada. I know there are many others to be introduced by you, Speaker.

Mrs. Julia Munro: Today I want to welcome to the assembly Brian Popowich, who is page captain Jessie Popowich's father. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Ms. Daiene Vernile: I'm very happy to welcome a good friend, Larry Rose, formerly of Kitchener Centre but now choosing to live in St. Paul's. Welcome.

Mr. Todd Smith: I'd like to welcome a former page, Olivia Fox, who is also the granddaughter of a former member here, Gary Fox, as part of the model Parliament. Welcome.

Mrs. Cristina Martins: I wanted to also introduce today here in the House Bill Moniz and Lino Torrado from OMNI, who here doing a documentary to be aired later on OMNI. Thank you and welcome.

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I'm pleased to rise to introduce Maddy Davidson from the great riding of Oxford county. She's participating in the 2016 Legislative Assembly of Ontario model Parliament and I want to welcome Maddy to Queen's Park.

Mr. Arthur Potts: It gives me great pleasure to introduce representatives of the Canadian Men's Health Foundation: Order of Canada recipient and founder Dr. Larry Goldenberg; President Wayne Hartrick; Canadian Olympic gold medallist in rowing, Adam Kreek, also a spokesperson; and Rod Elliot of Global Public Affairs. Thank you. Welcome, gentlemen.

Ms. Jennifer K. French: I would also like to welcome, from my riding of Oshawa, Jacob Ebbs, who is participating in this year's model Parliament. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: I'd like to welcome Diana Eqbe, who is the new general assistant in my office, joining us today. Welcome.

Mr. Tim Hudak: I'm also pleased to introduce Lachandra Jordan, similarly joining the assembly from the state of Ohio as an intern. She has a particular interest in the sharing economy, and the poor young woman got stuck with Hudak. Welcome to the assembly and good luck in my office.

Hon. Mitzie Hunter: I need to correct my record for Hansard. The Consul General for Jamaica is Lloyd Wilks.
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The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

Not that we haven't mentioned it, but we have with us in the public galleries today 95 students from across the province, participating in the third annual Legislative Assembly of Ontario Model Parliament. Please join me in welcoming all of them, including an individual from my own riding. I'll just leave it at that.

I'd also like to thank all parties in the House for participating in making the model Parliament work the way it does. Congratulations and have a great weekend.

Applause.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): We also have with us in the Speaker's gallery a delegation of consuls general and members of the consular corps representing 11 Caribbean countries. Please join me in welcoming our guests from the Caribbean.

Now I would ask all members to please join me in welcoming the family of the late Derwyn Shea, MPP for High Park–Swansea during the 36th Parliament, who are seated in the Speaker's gallery. His partner, Christine Schubert, cousin Lorraine Clarkson and friends Sarah Davies, Janet Carwardine and France Cass are here to pay tribute. Welcome, and we're glad you're here with us today.

Also along with us to pay tribute in the Speaker's gallery are former members: Mr. David Turnbull, MPP for York Mills during the 35th and 36th Parliaments and MPP for Don Valley West during the 37th Parliament; Mr. David Warner, Speaker during the 35th Parliament; Mr. John Parker, MPP for York East during the 36th Parliament; Mr. Steve Gilchrist, MPP for Scarborough East during the 36th and 37th Parliaments; Mr. Murad Velshi, MPP for Don Mills during the 34th Parliament, and his wife, Mariam. Welcome to our former members who are here today.

DERWYN SHEA

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

Hon. James J. Bradley: Mr. Speaker, I believe that you will find that we have unanimous consent to pay tribute to Derwyn Shea, former member for High Park–Swansea, with a representative from each caucus speaking for up to five minutes.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The deputy House leader is seeking unanimous consent to pay tribute. Do we agree? Agreed. Thank you.

The member from Parkdale–High Park.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: It's an honour and a privilege to rise today and remember the life of the Rev. Canon Derwyn Spencer Shea. This was a gentleman who was born in 1937. In fact, his elder brother was shot down in the Second World War, and Derwyn himself would go back to England to recognize that event every second year of his life.

He was first and foremost a pastor. He was first and foremost a Christian, and he lived for his faith and through his faith. In fact, it was his faith that brought him here and took him to city council in Toronto. He was ordained in 1966 as an Anglican priest, and he worked in the dioceses of Saskatchewan, Algoma and Toronto. He founded the Eastview Neighbourhood Association for latchkey youth in Toronto's east end and was co-author of the benchmark East Toronto Deanery Study.

He was the first Canadian ever to receive a fellowship from the Academy of Parish Clergy and was a member of the city of Toronto's planning board from 1972 to 1982, including four years as chairman, when he was elected in his first attempt as senior alderman in Toronto's ward 1. I have to say, Mr. Speaker, that it was Derwyn who fought to change the name from "alderman," because it clearly left women out, to "councillor."

As a member of council, he served with a number of agencies, boards and commissions. He was variously a police commissioner and a commissioner of Toronto Hydro, as well as president of the Canadian National Exhibition, governor of Exhibition Place and chair at the O'Keefe Centre. He served on a number of hospital boards: Toronto General, Toronto Western, Princess Margaret and Runnymede Chronic Care.

In the 1995 provincial election, Shea defeated New Democratic Party cabinet minister and incumbent Elaine Ziemba and became a member of Mike Harris's caucus for the next four years, serving as parliamentary assistant for the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, and then as parliamentary assistant for citizenship, culture and recreation.

He retired from the Legislature in 1999 and returned to his position as rector of St. Clement's Anglican church in Riverdale. In 2000, Shea initiated, and was later elected founding chair of, the Ontario Association of Former Parliamentarians. I'll talk about that more in a minute.

I want to share something with the assembly that Steve Paikin wrote about Derwyn Shea. He said that, although Shea was a man of faith with modest ambitions, it did not "mean he was a shrinking violet. During the Harris government's first term in office, the finance minister, Ernie Eves, was considering bringing in a new 'market value assessment' property tax system for Ontario's cities. The gist of the new system was to raise property taxes on older homes which hadn't been reassessed in decades and therefore were paying a ... lower share...."

"When Shea discovered what that would mean for his constituents in the west end of old Toronto, he hit the roof. He marched into Eves's office and gave him an earful about how seniors in his ward would have to sell

their homes because they could no longer afford to pay their property taxes.

“Given that he was a clergyman, I asked”—this is Steve Paikin—“Shea how intense the conversation with Eves got. The answer was ‘plenty.’

“‘Was there any profanity used?’ I asked.

“‘Yes, by both of us,’ he replied.

“Shocked at the notion of an Anglican Church minister and a provincial finance minister using longshoreman’s language, I asked one more question.

“‘Did you use the F-word?’”

Shea replied, “‘Not unless you mean ‘fundamental.’”

One of his most enduring accomplishments while representing what is now my riding was in getting the Humber River in Toronto’s west end designated as a historic river. We’re thankful for that, I can tell you.

“‘It was a really exciting moment to get that through Parliament,’ Shea said. There were long negotiations but eventually his private member’s bill passed. ‘I’m very proud of that.... It gives us the chance to really make sure that river goes through reclamation and gets improved. That really made my day.’”

I also want to highlight the fact that he was one of the founding members—as you will hear, I’m sure, from others—of the Ontario Association of Former Parliamentarians. This goes back to Reverend Shea’s faith. Really, first and foremost, he was a pastor, and in his retirement he really was a pastor to all of us here in starting that organization.

I want to say thank you on behalf of the New Democratic Party and our leader Andrea Horwath for the life of Derwyn Shea lived here, in part, in this assembly, and to his family for sharing it with us.

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

Hon. James J. Bradley: I’m delighted to have the opportunity to pay tribute to the Reverend Canon Derwyn Spencer Shea, who, while he served in the Legislature for only one term, had a profound effect on the deliberations both in this House and within the Progressive Conservative caucus.

I first met Derwyn Shea, that I can recall, in 1995, when he introduced himself to me and to several colleagues in the Legislature upon his first appearance in the chamber. It was in his usual jovial, friendly manner, which all who knew him can recall to this very day. He was the kind of individual who made a good first impression and the kind of person who always had a cordial greeting whenever he encountered you, whether it was in the House, in a legislative committee, in the hallway or on the streets of Toronto.

Derwyn had a dual role to play in his community as both an Anglican priest and a politician, first at the municipal level, as has been mentioned, and as a member of the Legislative Assembly of Ontario. In doing so, he had to walk what Toronto Sun columnist John Downing referred to as a tightrope in a column in April 1999, when Derwyn announced his retirement from provincial politics.

I always wondered why, being such a progressive individual, he chose the party he did. Some people said to me that in those days the Anglican Church was really the Conservative Party at prayer. I discounted that completely because I never thought it to be the case. But certainly, he was very much loved by members of all parties in this House and not simply by his own friends within the Progressive Conservative Party.

1050

There was much speculation—and I assure you, it was only that—that Reverend Shea was leaving because of dissatisfaction with his government’s policies or fear of defeat because the riding boundaries were changing. I suspect the real reason was to devote his full time to his first calling, that being his role in the Anglican Church. He truly did take that role so very seriously.

Without a doubt, there are always inevitable conflicts that arise when the teachings of the church clash with political imperatives of a government, and knowing Derwyn as a compassionate, caring individual with a strong commitment to Christian values and principles, he very likely came to the conclusion that he should devote all of his attention to his duties and his responsibilities as a priest. I’m certain that his decision was welcomed, if not by his party, which loved him very much and which found him to be a good member of the Legislature, by the Anglican Church, which wanted his full time and attention because he was so instrumental in its success in Toronto.

I think it’s safe to say that Derwyn was not afraid to ruffle feathers or dissent from the prevailing view, as he demonstrated in embracing the call for change in the title of local city politician from “alderman” to “councillor”; or when he suggested that the CNE needed a more multi-cultural flair to make it a truly national attraction; or for taking independent stands on issues before the Toronto Police Commission—and he did that quite vociferously and openly.

There’s a cat story to this, as well. The headline says, “MPP Joins Cat Fight: Shea Backs Tigger in a Tea Shop.” Only the Sun could come up with these particular headlines.

“Tigger, the feline fighting the law ruling he poses a health risk by curling up in his owner’s Say Tea shop, found an ally in his local MPP yesterday.

“‘I’m proud to wear Tigger’s colours,’ said Derwyn Shea, MPP for Tigger’s High Park–Swansea riding. ‘He’s a terrific cat,’ said Shea, who claims to be ‘owned’ by four cats himself. ‘And I say “Tigger, come on home and get in your window and enjoy the sunshine”,’ he said....

“Shea has asked Jim Wilson”—who was around at that time and still is—“the Minister of Health, to review the regulations prohibiting Tigger’s catnapping in the shop.

“If the regulation can’t be changed, Shea promised Tigger’s owner, Wendy Winship, he would present her 2,000-signature petition to the Legislature.”

So Derwyn was prepared to take on the cats, as well.

When you review the various agencies, boards and commissions that Derwyn Shea was part of, you understand his love for and his devotion to his community and so many good causes in that community. Whether it was the Toronto planning board, municipal council, the O'Keefe Centre, the Variety Club, the Ugandan Relief and Development Organization, the Hospital for Sick Children Herbie Fund, the Eastview Neighbourhood Association for latchkey youth, the boards of Toronto General, Princess Margaret and the Runnymede Chronic Care Facility, Derwyn was prepared to dedicate his time, talent and enthusiasm. For that, all of us in this province should be extremely thankful.

On a personal note, I applaud Derwyn for his distaste for government gambling policies, a cause with which I'm in sympathy with the former MPP for High Park–Swansea. For those of you who have been around for a while and had to listen to me drone on about the evils of gambling—there were members of the Legislature from different parties who did that—I was really glad when Derwyn took that cause on, as well.

The Reverend Canon Derwyn Shea demonstrated his commitment to the ministry—this is rather interesting—by bequests in his estate to the Diocese of Toronto to establish a fund for the assistance of parish clergy and to Wycliffe College to fund a chair of urban ministry in memory of his late wife.

For many present members of the Legislature, the last time we saw him was at a gathering of the Ontario Association of Former Parliamentarians, an organization he founded and led with great dedication and commitment. He may no longer be with us in the mortal sense, but his irrepressible spirit and ready smile will remain forever in all of our memories.

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

Mr. Tim Hudak: I'm pleased to rise on behalf of the Ontario PC caucus in tribute to our friend and colleague the Reverend Canon Derwyn Shea. Welcome to friends here as part of this tribute.

I'll confess, when I first got here and I sat in the very back corner, Derwyn Shea scared me. He was an intimidating fellow. I remember getting here and trying to get the measure of the characters I was about to serve with. Norm Sterling was very professorial; he was always carrying around a book or a newspaper. Jim Wilson was a young firebrand with a beautiful set of hair. David Turnbull, who joins us today, the former member for York Mills, was our party whip. He had this clipped British accent, so, to me, he was some kind of Bond villain making sure we were all in place. And Ted Arnott, well, he still looks the same. But Derwyn intimidated me. He had this gravitas, this authority to him. He was well read, well educated, principled, good at his job and he tended to get his way.

My colleagues from St. Catharines and Parkdale–High Park did an excellent job talking about his accomplishments here, but let me tell you a little bit about how he got that way. He entered the Anglican ministry at 30 years of age after having served in the military and with Bell Telephone.

As is customary when you start out in the church, his early parishes were off the beaten track, initially in rural Saskatchewan and then—to my colleague from Nickel Belt—Capreol. Let me tell you a bit about that. When he got to Capreol he found that his new, small, white-frame parish church required renovations. He commissioned one of the finest stained glass artists in the country to create a new, beautiful stained glass window to be installed right over the front door of the parish. Years later, Derwyn took pride in having negotiated on behalf of the church probably the lowest price the artist had ever agreed to in his career.

Later he was called to serve as the parish priest in the church of St. Clement on Jones Avenue in Toronto. The member from Toronto–Danforth nods, knowing the parish and the neighbourhood. The changing demographics of the area at the time had depleted the traditional congregation and Reverend Derwyn Shea had his marching orders. He was to supervise the orderly closure of the church altogether, but those of us who knew Derwyn knew that he would have other plans. He reached out to the newly arrived ethnic communities in the neighbourhood. He was warm to the existing congregation and he built a new congregation comprised primarily of members who had not been made to feel welcome before. The church became robust and successful. For his achievement, Derwyn received a personal commendation from the Archbishop of Canterbury, confirmed in a personal letter that remained framed and mounted on Derwyn's wall for the rest of his life.

It was Derwyn's passion for service to people and his desire to contribute to the well-being of the community that shortly led him into political life, first at the municipal level in Toronto, starting with service as a member of volunteer municipal boards. In 1972, he was appointed to the then city of Toronto planning board as part of a clean sweep by the new mayor at the time, David Crombie. In due course, he was elected to Toronto city council and then Metro council, all the while continuing to lead Sunday services at St. Clement's church.

In Derwyn's first municipal election in the early 1990s, he was returned to Metro council, holding off a challenge by an aspiring young politician, actually a law school classmate of the Honourable Tony Clement, a young fellow by the name of David Miller.

At Queen's Park, Derwyn recognized that he was now playing a team sport. He never lost track of which team he played for but he never lost sight of the important work that we do.

Members who were here at the time will also remember that in 1995 there were actually 82 of us. So while I was in the far back corner, there was a significant group of Conservative MPPs on that side. They called themselves "the rump." That's where Derwyn sat. It didn't take Derwyn long to realize that his seat was caught on camera at the opening of each daily session as the mace was paraded in through the front doors. He saw the benefit that came from that happy circumstance. Whether Derwyn had business before the House or whether he had

House duty or not, he made sure that every day he was in his seat as the mace came by. Similarly, he would slip in and slip out as the mace made its exit.

1100

So it's no surprise to you that I mentioned the rump. It was a matter of time before Derwyn became the leader of the PC rump. He might have even come up with the name; I'm not sure. He would produce a regular rump newsletter that he would post on the wall of the caucus office, and he'd set out the causes of various kinds, political and otherwise, that the members of the rump purported to advance. Members of the Harris cabinet who would have been surviving question period in the day would then get battered back in the caucus room if they had crossed a member of the rump.

My colleague Mr. Bradley mentioned Reverend Canon Shea's opposition to gambling. When the initial plan was to put VLTs in bars, restaurants and 30-some casinos, he was successful, and not just behind closed doors. He stood up publicly and voiced his opposition. I think he was part of the reason why we pulled that back. Eventually slots at racetracks—on which Derwyn said, "Look, I'm a realist. I know they're not going to the racetrack on Sunday to go to church."

The mutual devotion of Derwyn and his wife Julia was an inspiration to all married couples. The two were gracious hosts to guests far and wide, and their annual Boxing Day open house was legendary. Each year they flung their doors open to members of the community, friends and neighbours—a who's who of all the celebrities, journalists, government officials, politicians and political activists who had crossed Derwyn's path over his many years of political activity. Even Liberal and NDP members were known to stop by from time to time with free admission, on the explicit understanding that no one present would rat them out to their caucus colleagues when the Legislature resumed a few weeks later.

This brings me to my last thing I want to recognize for Derwyn on what he did for all members of this House. As my colleagues rightly said, he never allowed political differences to become personal in any way, shape or form. He respected any member regardless of party affiliation who he believed had chosen a political life with a genuine intention to advance a cause of a better world and to share their perspective on how we can best work together to achieve that better world.

He was deeply troubled, Speaker, by the suicide of Hans Daigeler, an MPP from the Ottawa area who tragically committed suicide after having lost office in 1995. With that terrible experience in mind, he set out and formed a group to work across party lines that became the Ontario Association of Former Parliamentarians. It was formally recognized historically as legislation in the House by being the first bill written by committee. In those days you couldn't have co-signers for bills, so he had all-party support in committee. Because he was the Chair at the time, the member for Scarborough East's name was actually on the bill, but Derwyn brought it forward with support from Liberals and NDP. They con-

tinued to work hard and support and create fellowship among former parliamentarians and forge friendships and alliances for alumni of this House, for others across Canada and now internationally.

One of Derwyn's great ambitions for that is achieved. Former parliamentarians go to university campuses to talk about public policy, to talk about the life and to inspire other young people to join us here one day as MPPs or as staff. There's no doubt, Speaker, that sadly, over time—I think in my 20 years my more veteran colleagues would probably agree that the role of politicians has been diminished, and I think all of us have, sadly, played a role in that. When you walk out of this universe into the other one out there, it's not always what you expect. Derwyn knew that; he looked out for us. So my fear dissipated and moved to one of tremendous respect and appreciation.

On behalf of the PC caucus I thank Derwyn for what he did in this chamber. Most importantly, we thank him for what he did outside of it.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): To the member from Niagara West-Glanbrook, I was blessed to be on that committee on the creation of the former parliamentarians. So again I'd say to former parliamentarians: Thank you for being here. It's a testimony to—I'll just move on.

To the family, we offer you, as we always do, a DVD of today's procedures. I thank all members for their very kind and heartfelt thoughts. You will receive a copy of Hansard as well. I want to thank all of you for being here on behalf of the entire House. Thank you very much.

And now the other side of the story: It's now time for question period.

ORAL QUESTIONS

ONTARIO BUDGET

Mr. Patrick Brown: My question is for the Premier. This week, the Liberals will table their ninth straight budget with a multi-billion-dollar deficit.

Applause.

Mr. Patrick Brown: The Premier and the finance minister want to applaud that because they have a history of blaming everyone except themselves. They've blamed the federal government; they've blamed a recession that was eight years ago.

The Fraser Institute did a recent study that shows that that history of blaming others is not supported by evidence, and that blaming the federal government—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): However, I'll still keep doing my job.

Please finish.

Mr. Patrick Brown: The Fraser Institute study says that blaming the federal government or blaming a recession from eight years ago is not supported in fact.

Given that recent study, when the Liberals table their budget with another multi-billion dollar deficit and a debt of over \$300 billion, what I want to know is who you're going to blame next?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Let me just be clear with the Leader of the Opposition and the people of Ontario that we are implementing our plan and, at the same time, we are eliminating the deficit. We're doing that in a way that's fair and we're doing it in a way that supports economic growth and the creation of jobs.

We are on track to eliminate our deficit by 2017-18, which is the track that we said we were on. We have stayed on it. We have overachieved in terms of deficit reduction every year and, at the same time, we have made—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): It goes both ways. I'm inches away from going into individuals and warnings.

Finish, please.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne:—investments in people, in their talent, in their skills and in the infrastructure that we know is needed around the province. At the same time, we are eliminating the deficit, and we're on track to do that by 2017-18.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Patrick Brown: I guess we'll have to wait until tomorrow to find out who they blame next.

My question is for the Premier. Let's talk about the facts: Every person in Ontario has a share of this government's debt. They owe \$21,000 because of the Liberals' mismanagement. As this government's debt grew—and grow it did—the debt-to-GDP ratio has gone from 27.5% when the government took office to 40% today. That is astonishing.

The interest payments on Ontario's debt have become the third-largest ministry in this government. The government is spending 22 times more on interest than what it spends on the Ministry of the Environment.

My question for the Premier is this: Will you apologize to the next generation of Ontario families who are going to have to pay for your decade of waste and incompetence?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I'm happy to look at the facts. We have taken steps to manage and control our spending growth while at the same time delivering the best possible value for every dollar. Ontario has consistently had the lowest per capita program spending among all Canadian provinces. In fact, 2014-15 marked the sixth year in a row that we reported both lower-than-projected program expenses and a lower deficit. We're doing this in a responsible way. We said that 2017-18 was the year that we would eliminate the deficit, and that is the year that we will eliminate the deficit.

I would remind the member opposite that as soon as he finishes his leadoff questions, his members are going to be standing up asking for more spending. They're going to be asking for increases in spending, which is

entirely inconsistent, not that I would expect consistency from the Leader of the Opposition.

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

Mr. Patrick Brown: Insults don't hide the truth.

I will be very clear: During your time in office, the debt-to-GDP ratio has gone from 27.5% to 40%. That is your legacy. That is your debt for Ontario.

Now, if it wasn't for Liberal scandal, waste and mismanagement—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Newmarket–Aurora, come to order.

Mr. Patrick Brown:—this government wouldn't have to sell Hydro One.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The Associate Minister of Finance, come to order.

Mr. Patrick Brown: They wouldn't have to raise taxes on everything from beer to jet fuel. They wouldn't have to charge tolls for highways that Ontario families have already paid for.

1110

The Financial Accountability Office, an office that you created, says that your numbers are wrong. They said that Ontario is on pace for a \$3.5-billion deficit in 2017-18. All the facts are against what your government is preaching.

Mr. Speaker, as our final budget ask, will the government include in their budget tomorrow a credible plan—not a stretch goal—for a balanced budget and take immediate action to pay down the \$300-billion Liberal debt?

Interjections.

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

Premier?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Mr. Speaker, we have a plan. We are on track to eliminate the deficit by 2017-18. If you look at the Conference Board of Canada, Ontario will be one of the growth leaders in 2016. BMO said that Ontario's economy is expected to be among the top performers this year. RBC said, "Ontario is poised to be among the faster-growing provincial economies in 2016." Mr. Speaker, we have a plan. We're implementing that plan. We are on track to eliminate the deficit.

The Leader of the Opposition wants us to increase health care beyond what we are already increasing it. He wants electricity prices to go down, either by a subsidy or—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Prince Edward–Hastings will come to order and the member from Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry will come to order.

Carry on.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I can only assume that he wants to either subsidize electricity prices or go back to coal—we're not doing that—and he wants the deficit

eliminated. There are inconsistencies in those arguments that are not compatible with responsible governance.

We have a plan. We're implementing that plan. We're on track to eliminate the deficit responsibly and invest in the people of this province.

Interjections.

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

New question.

ONTARIO BUDGET

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Good morning, Speaker. My question is for the Premier. Later today, we will debate our opposition day motion related to tomorrow's budget. We've presented three basic requests that we believe the government of Ontario should meet, quite frankly, at a bare minimum.

One of those key asks is that the government put forward a credible plan to balance the budget and pay down our debt. The Auditor General, the Financial Accountability Officer and even the CBC said that there are consequences to perpetual deficits and the \$300-billion debt this government has amassed. We pay nearly \$1 billion a month in interest, which is crowding out key services. We see it every day in our health care cuts.

The Premier has scoffed at our other asks. Will she at least support this one?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Speaker, we have a plan. We have a credible plan. The member opposite will see in the budget tomorrow that we are on track. He knows that year after year, we have over-performed on our deficit reduction targets and that we're on track—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound, come to order.

I have now decided to move to warnings—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I want to make sure that those who are talking over top of me hear it again: I'm moving to warnings.

Carry on.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: The member opposite knows full well that for six years in a row, we have been eliminating the deficit. We are on target to eliminate it completely by 2017-18.

But I will return to the fact that the three requests that the opposition party is putting forward are inconsistent. You cannot increase health care beyond what we are already doing and lower electricity prices, either through a subsidy or going back to coal, and at the same time speed up the elimination—

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

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Back to the Premier: Nobody believes a word that this government says anymore, and is it any wonder why? They claim to have a path to balance, but the confidential gas plants scandal documents we uncovered showed they have a multi-billion dollar hole in that plan. In fact, the Financial Accountability Officer

confirmed what was in those documents in his last report. And the fall economic statement showed, plain as day, that they're using the money from the sale of Hydro One to make the deficit appear smaller.

My question is to the Premier: Will your budget be simply more word games and sleight of hand, or will you present a truly credible plan to balance the books?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Not only does the Financial Accountability Officer recognize in his scenarios that our government's return to balance is achievable, he also acknowledged that the government is on track, when he made his statement, to reach our 2015-16 deficit target of \$8.5 billion. He also acknowledges that we're taking a responsible approach to holding spending growth in order to meet our targets.

We are happy to have the scrutiny of the Financial Accountability Officer. We're happy to have the scrutiny of the opposition party. But I would say to the opposition party and the people of Ontario that we have to have a consistency in the debate. We have to have the opportunity to say, "Well, if you're asking us to do more in terms of health care and increase spending"—because we continue to increase health care spending but you're pushing for increased spending in health care—"if you want electricity prices to go down through a subsidy or returning to coal, we're not going to do that, and we have a plan to eliminate the deficit."

So on all fronts, we have responses today to what the opposition is asking.

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

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Back to the Premier: I had hoped the Premier would treat the concerns of families seriously, Speaker, but apparently that's not to be. They're not even concerned with the appearance of consulting with families anymore. They knew full well that the budget was written when all three parties toured the province on pre-budget consultations. They knew that when they sent us out to work.

Last week, the finance minister called our budget a fiscal fantasy. Apparently, it's a fantasy to ask for affordable hydro. Apparently, adequate staffing in our hospitals is now a fantasy. How arrogant, Speaker, how out of touch has this government become?

So my question is, will the Premier stop her double-speak and begin to help Ontario families—

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

Mr. Victor Fedeli: I withdraw, Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Finish your question.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Thank you, Speaker.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: We are very, very concerned with the needs of the people in this province, which is why, if we want to talk about the electricity sector, we have put programs in place specifically to help people who are struggling to pay their bills get some support. The Ontario Electricity Support Program is for low-income families. That is why it has been put in place, Mr. Speaker.

We understand that we need to continue to invest in health care and increase funding. We have been doing that year over year and we will continue to do that.

But at the same time, we recognize that eliminating the deficit is a part of our fiscal responsibility. That's why we have a plan to do that. The members opposite will see in the budget that we have taken responsible steps on all of those fronts. Given that, I look forward to their support of our budget, Mr. Speaker.

ONTARIO BUDGET

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is for the Premier. In the last two budgets, the Premier has made deep cuts to education. Will the education cuts continue in Thursday's budget or will the Premier respect the needs of Ontario students and stop the cuts to education?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I just have to say to the leader of the third party that what she has said is just not accurate. In fact, the funding for education has stayed stable, even in the face of fewer students in the system, which means that the per capita expenditure on students has gone up. There is more money per capita for students in the education system now than previously.

The reality is that we understand that having schools that are well-staffed, having school buildings that are in good shape, therefore having capital dollars for school boards to spend on those, is critical, which is why education funding continues to be stable year over year.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Speaker, I don't know what the Premier defines as stable. On Monday, the Premier said, "We're not cutting education funding." But in the 2014 budget, the Liberal government slashed \$400 million out of education. In the 2015 budget, they slashed \$250 million from education. The Premier's own documents say that she's now planning to cut another \$250 million in this year's budget.

Now that's nearly \$1 billion cut in just three years, Speaker, and it means closing more schools and cutting vital supports to students. Will this Premier come clean and tell the people of this province and tell the students of this province if she, in fact, will be cutting another \$250 million or more in Thursday's budget out of the education file?

1120

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Education.

Hon. Liz Sandals: I'm pleased to answer this question once again. This is actually becoming fairly regular.

To make it perfectly clear, we have not cut the education budget. It is \$22.5 billion transferred to school boards this year; it was \$22.5 billion transferred to school boards the year before. And, as the Premier has already noted, because the number of students has actually declined fairly dramatically, we have more money per pupil. You would be interested to know, Speaker, that over the length of our mandate, the per pupil funding has actually gone up 59%.

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The Premier and her minister seem to think that everything is just fine in education. But tell that to the people who have seen their neighbourhood schools close, like the delegation that's here today from Harrow, or parents of the most vulnerable students in our province, who are seeing supports like special education slashed, or students who are freezing cold and have to wear their jackets in their classrooms while they are learning just because the heaters are broken and there's no money to fix them.

The Premier may be in denial about what her cuts mean—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Come to order.

Please finish.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The Premier may be in denial and her minister may be in denial about what their cuts mean, but students and their families and educators see first-hand—first-hand—what's happening, Speaker.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs is warned.

Please finish.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: But do you know what, Speaker? The money lost from selling off Hydro One could lead to even deeper cuts in education.

Will Thursday's budget stop the cuts to education? That is the question that this government needs to answer.

Hon. Liz Sandals: I'm very pleased to report that when you look at the record over the past several years, you will find that, in fact, the high school graduation rate in Ontario has gone up. When we came into office, the high school graduation rate in Ontario was 68%. The high school graduation rate in Ontario is now 84%. Not only have we increased student achievement; we have already invested over \$13.9 billion in 755 new schools and 700 major additions and retrofits. We'll continue to invest, with another \$11 billion going to new schools, major renovation and school consolidations.

HEALTH CARE FUNDING

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My next question is also for the Premier. This Premier might think her health transformation looks good on paper, but for everyday people it is ugly. Nurses are being fired. Home care wait times are months long, even though the Premier committed to the NDP plan for a five-day home care wait time. I guess that was another one of the Premier's stretch goals. Hospitals are closing beds; surgeries are being cancelled. Will this Premier admit that patients are paying the price for her cutbacks in health care and stop the cuts?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Well, again, as in the discussion around education, the leader of the third party is just not accurate. The fact is that the information is not accurate. The fact is that we continue to increase health care spending. We are very acutely aware of the need for

more supports in things like community care and mental health. There is money going into those sectors.

Again, year over year, health care spending increases. So we recognize, as the demographics change in this province—and, again, this is also related to education, because the demographic shift is very real. The population is aging. People want a different kind of health care and a different delivery. They want it in their homes. They want it in the community. Those are the changes that are happening. Change is challenging for people, but it's real, and we continue to increase funding in order to make that change happen.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Either this Premier is not aware or she has her head in the sand. The fundamentals of health care are pretty basic. It's making sure that the care is there for people when and where they need it.

Instead of strengthening care, people are seeing cuts to the care that they need. Hospital care is facing cuts. People are facing massive home care wait-lists, and finding a long-term-care space for seniors can take years in this province.

Is Thursday's budget going to reverse the cuts and put the focus on improving health care, or is this Premier going to continue cutting and insisting that everything is just fine?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I know that the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care is going to want to comment in the next supplementary, but let me just be very, very clear: It is our responsibility, as government, to make sure that we continue to improve the services for the people in this province, that we continue to work to get the outcomes on surgery wait times, on community care access, and to make sure that young people who need mental health supports and seniors who need supports get those supports.

When the leader of the third party proposes that somehow I am satisfied with the status quo, she is absolutely wrong. Everything about our government is about finding ways to improve services for the people of the province, to build up those services, to make sure that hospitals and health science centres and community services are improved. That's why—

Interjections.

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

Start the clock. Final supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The Premier might be aware of what her responsibility is, but what she isn't aware of is that she is failing in that responsibility miserably for the people of Ontario. There is a serious problem when people across Ontario ask for something really basic, like making sure our health care system provides the care that they need, but what they get is a Liberal government that keeps closing beds, putting hospitals into gridlock, firing nurses and keeping people waiting for home care and for long-term care.

The Premier's job is to work for all Ontarians, but there are more and more people who cannot get the

health care that they need in this province. That is the fact. Will this Premier acknowledge that health care is supposed to be about meeting people's needs and stop any further cuts to health care?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: The Minister of Health and Long-Term Care.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: Mr. Speaker, there aren't any cuts to health care. We're continuing to increase, year after year, the budget. We've—

Interjections.

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

Hon. Eric Hoskins: Well, Mr. Speaker, it's a good thing that I didn't remind the third party that they fired 3,000 nurses or that they delisted home care from OHIP when they were in government.

Let's just take one piece of evidence to demonstrate the improvements that have been made: the almost \$2 billion that we have invested specifically to help reduce wait times for surgeries and diagnostic imaging. As a result of that investment, we have saved Ontarians 282 million total days that they otherwise would have had to wait for these services. We went from the worst wait times in all of Canada, when we inherited government from the Conservatives—we now have the shortest wait times in Canada.

ONTARIO BUDGET

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: My question is to the Treasury Board president. Tomorrow, this government will table its ninth consecutive deficit—overachievers, the lot of them—borrowing more money than they take in and paying almost \$1 billion in interest payments that should instead be intended for hospitals and classrooms. The Treasury Board president's mandate letter is very clear. It says, "You will work closely with your fellow cabinet ministers to ensure that our government meets its fiscal targets." Yet she is not.

1130

Both the Auditor General and the Financial Accountability Officer said that this government has no credible plan to balance the budget. In fact, all we saw today was a plan to increase taxes, and that's not sustainable on the people of this province. Can the minister explain to the people of this House why she refuses to follow her mandate letter and why she is willing to compromise the fiscal health of this province?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I know we're all very anxious to see tomorrow's budget. I'm sure everybody will be here and will listen to the news, and we will confirm that we are in fact on track to meet our commitment to balance the budget by 2017-18. We are doing it in a way that is thoughtful, that is disciplined, that is responsible. We are going through every service, every program and every ministry across government, finding ways to deliver services better for people, sometimes at a lower cost. That work is under way. We are on track to balance, and we will all look forward to tomorrow where you will

actually see further details on our plan to achieve balance while protecting the services that people rely on.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Speaker, the fact is, the only thing they're on track to do is change our licence plate to "Ontario, Yours to Recover."

Back to the President of the Treasury Board. She has one job: to find savings right across the province—

Interjections.

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

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: She has one job: to put the province back to balance. That's not going to happen, according to the Auditor General and the Financial Accountability Office, as well as their own internal documents, as my colleague stated earlier, that we recovered during the gas plant scandal. The only accomplishment, in fact, that she had last year was an across-the-board salary increase in the public sector.

I need to remind the minister that every single dollar that we spend servicing the debt and the deficit is a dollar taken away from a child in a classroom or a patient in a hospital bed. Without a credible plan to return to surplus or balance, financing Ontario's public services will be compromised.

So I ask her again, will the President of the Treasury Board commit to this House for a long-term, realistic, credible plan—not a stretch goal, not an aspirational goal, but a real credible plan?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: In the first question, we are on track to balance our budget by 2017-18, and tomorrow we'll reveal more details about that.

But I have to say, Speaker, that this is actually a refreshing day in question period, because for the first time the member from Nipissing has a question and the member from Nepean-Carleton has a question about fiscal responsibility. Until today, all we've been hearing is, "Spend more, spend more, spend more. Pay doctors more. Spend more on this, spend more on that."

Today, we are reminded there is still this notion within the Conservative Party that fiscal responsibility is important. We are delivering on the promise to get to balance. We are doing it in a thoughtful, responsible way that protects the services and enhances the services that people—

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

New question.

CLIMATE CHANGE

Mr. Peter Tabuns: My question is to the Minister of the Environment and Climate Change. We all know that everyone is going to have to do their part to take on climate change. We also know that some are in a stronger position to help than others. In British Columbia, low-income families receive assistance from the government dealing with their carbon tax. In Alberta, the government's proposing to help low-income families with support that will leave them, overall, better off, even with Alberta's new carbon tax. Will the government support a new consumer rebate to ensure that cap-and-trade does not increase inequality in Ontario?

Hon. Glen R. Murray: We are very concerned about two things that are tied into our plan. One is that we achieve the maximum level of job creation in the low-carbon economy, because the world is going to be different and the economy's going to be different. We, in our partnership with Quebec and California, will be leading the North American economy, and are in job creation already, before we've made the massive investments in building retrofits, in making modest-income family homes less expensive to live in, making transportation less expensive by our investments in public transit and electric vehicles and that infrastructure. We already have \$325 million out there, including subsidies for social housing and working families. We are already, even before our system is up and operating, investing at a level that almost no other jurisdiction is. We think that we're already really on the pathway to what the member's objectives are.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Peter Tabuns: The Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives and the Sierra Club recently noted that struggling families spend a higher percentage of their household income on home heating and on gasoline than those from wealthier households. These struggling families have less control over their emissions, particularly if they're tenants or if they lack access to transit.

I believe that the vast majority of Ontarians, regardless of income, are ready to do their part to take on climate change, but the burden has to be shared fairly. What support will this government give to struggling families to ensure that cap-and-trade does not increase inequality in Ontario?

Hon. Glen R. Murray: The short answer to that question is really an unprecedented investment in two things that cost families money: transportation and managing the cost of their homes. We will be massively investing in those.

We know this will not have any upward pressure on electricity prices. As a matter of fact, we expect a modest reduction in the cost of electricity for families in that area. Working with energy and my colleagues at municipal affairs and housing, we already have demonstration projects out there that are going to help communities get homeowners into technology that costs almost nothing. We have a great nuclear baseload overnight that we can actually use to charge electric vehicles.

This transformation, though, is about something else that working families need: more and better jobs. When we retrofit every building in Ontario over the next two or three decades, that will be an unprecedented job creation initiative for middle- and low-income families—unprecedented because it's easy to afford it when you've got a good income.

AIR-RAIL LINK

Mrs. Cristina Martins: My question is for the Minister of Transportation. Transit is an incredibly important part of life in my community of Davenport. My constitu-

ents want to know that they have access to transit that is both reliable and affordable. While many living in Davenport have expressed how impressed they are with the reliability of the Union Pearson Express, I have been hearing from residents since prior to my election that the UPX should be more accessible for their families.

I have long advocated for greater accessibility to the service on behalf of my community. That is why I was pleased to join the Minister of Transportation and the MPPs for Trinity–Spadina and York South–Weston, as well as representatives from Metrolinx, for an announcement on this topic yesterday.

Mr. Speaker, can the minister please provide members of this House with more details on what our government is doing to make the Union Pearson Express more affordable for my constituents of Davenport and for all Ontarians?

Hon. Steven Del Duca: I want to begin by thanking the member from Davenport not only for the question, but for her advocacy relating to this issue and relating to better transit for the people of Davenport.

Since the UP Express first launched in June 2015, it has been offering predictable and reliable service for passengers. Over the last eight months, it's become clear that those who have had the opportunity to use the UP Express love it.

It's equally clear to us that ridership numbers need to increase and more needs to be done to make this happen. That's why I was pleased to join with caucus colleagues to announce yesterday that we will be significantly reducing the UP Express fare. Effective March 9, passengers using a Presto card will be able to travel from Union to Pearson for \$9. The cost for non-Presto-card users will be \$12.

Speaker, these new, lower fares will make taking the UP Express more affordable for middle-class families and commuters, and it will also attract more riders.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary? The member from York South–Weston.

Mrs. Laura Albanese: I would like to thank the minister for that answer. Yesterday's announcement was particularly important for those living in York South–Weston, a community that has long advocated for these changes—they were the first to advocate for these changes—and that is made up of people who are looking for fast, frequent and affordable transit service to get downtown.

As part of the announcement, you stated that fares along the UP Express routes will be better aligned with existing GO fares. This means that a commuter taking the UP Express from Weston station can expect to pay \$4.71 for one stop and \$5.02 for two stops to Union Station with a Presto card. The new fare structure is a very exciting announcement.

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The minister also mentioned other measures that will be taken to increase ridership. Can he please give us some details on that?

Hon. Steven Del Duca: I also thank the member for York South–Weston for her advocacy on this and many other issues.

As I mentioned earlier, we lowered the UP Express fare because we know that ridership numbers need to increase. But lowering fares is just one of the steps that we are taking to increase ridership. In partnership with Metrolinx, we have identified barriers such as low awareness, ingrained travel habits and impediments to ticket sales, and are strategizing to overcome these barriers.

Marketing campaigns, better way-finding signage and incentive programs are examples of some of the strategies that are being developed and will be deployed to ensure that we improve ridership. I am confident that these steps, in addition to the significantly reduced fares announced yesterday, will lead to further growth in ridership. I strongly encourage all travellers and commuters in the region, those visiting the region and members of both opposition parties, to join with us and try the Union Pearson Express because we know that once you do, you will love it.

ONTARIO BUDGET

Mr. Monte McNaughton: My question today is for the Premier. This government has failed to balance the books nine straight times. Along the way, they've piled up nearly \$300 billion in debt and driven our debt-to-GDP ratio from 27% to over 40% today. That's a 48% increase in just nine years. Interest payments alone account for \$11.4 billion each and every year, money that could and should be going to pay for new investments and key programs.

Premier, instead of reduced funding for doctors, school closures and increased hydro rates, Ontario taxpayers deserve a credible plan to balance the budget, including immediate action to pay down Ontario's massive \$300-billion debt. When the Premier's budget is presented tomorrow, will she finally stand with Ontario taxpayers and have a plan to pay down Ontario's debt?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: That plan is in place, and it is a responsible plan. What the member opposite is doing is including in one question, "eliminate the deficit," which we have a plan to do; we're on track to do that, and at the same time he's saying, "Increase spending"—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock, please. The to-and-fro is not helpful for me to stay focused, and I wish that it would stop from both sides.

Finish, please.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: He's saying, "Even though you"—government—"are increasing funding in health care year over year, pay doctors more." Doctors who are the highest paid in the country: Pay them more. Pay more into the health care system, beyond the increases that we're making. At the same time, he is inconsistently saying, "Move faster on eliminating the deficit."

We have a plan in place. We are on track to eliminate the deficit by 2017-18. But we are investing in Ontario's growth. We are investing in the economic growth that's creating jobs today and is creating economic prosperity into the future.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Monte McNaughton: Back to the Premier: In less than 10 years, Ontario's debt has grown by 91%, the highest rate of growth of any provincial government. Shamefully, taxpayers are now shelling out almost \$1 million a month in interest payments alone.

Later today, Premier, I'll introduce a private member's bill to cap Ontario's debt. My bill would install a provincial debt ceiling as a means to help limit and curb your reckless spending addiction.

The Financial Accountability Officer has already stated that if your revenue and spending continue as they have, you will run deficits both this year and next year.

So I'm asking the Premier again: When will you present a credible plan to balance the budget, including immediate action to pay down Ontario's debt?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: We'll be presenting that plan tomorrow because that is the plan that has been in place. We are on track to eliminate the deficit by 2017-18.

The reckless proposal that the member opposite is putting forward would lead to an inability of government to meet the needs of the people in this province.

Let me talk about the things that we have been investing in: the largest infrastructure investment in our history—\$134 billion over 10 years. What that does is it creates 110,000 jobs a year and it meets the needs of communities to have upgraded infrastructure. We're ensuring that all Ontarians have access to a secure retirement. We're protecting the environment through our coal plant closures and the new cap-and-trade program. We are moving ahead to make sure that more refugees can settle in Ontario.

All of those things are part of the economy of this province. The economy is more than a balance sheet; it is the environment that we live in and it is the services that we provide now for people and into the future for our children and our grandchildren. That's the plan that we're implementing, Mr. Speaker.

ONTARIO BUDGET

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: My question is to the Minister of Transportation. We now know that the budget was written before Ontarians were actually given a chance to tell the government their priorities. It's too bad, because this government might have learned something.

The mayor of London told the finance committee that transit use in London has nearly doubled since 1998 and continues to grow. That's why the city council unanimously agreed last November to support a \$1.1-billion investment in rapid transit.

Mayor Brown asked for a one-third contribution from the provincial government. Will this week's budget

include funding for this important rapid transit project in London?

Hon. Steven Del Duca: I'm actually quite happy to report that I had an opportunity to meet with the mayor and other members of London city council just this past Sunday at the OGRA/ROMA conference. We had a wonderful conversation, like we have in the past, about this very topic, Speaker.

What I explained to them was that we look forward to receiving their detailed business case. I understand that the municipality is planning to provide that to us in the next few weeks. We will take that business case. We will do the same analysis for that business case that we do with any of the other transit business cases that we receive, and we'll continue to engage in dialogue with the municipality to move forward with progress for London as it relates to their infrastructure, as we do with all 444 municipalities.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: I also met with the London delegation at the OGRA/ROMA conference, and they continually mentioned that they didn't get an answer back from this government.

The government has pledged \$15 billion towards transportation infrastructure outside the greater Toronto and Hamilton area, but hardly any of this money has started flowing. In fact, for people living outside the GTHA, last year's budget mainly announced plans to defer transportation infrastructure to future years.

London is the largest city in Canada without a rapid transit system. London is ready to put its money on the table, but the city needs a provincial funding partner. Will this week's budget include a commitment to fund London's rapid transit program, beginning next year?

Hon. Steven Del Duca: I appreciate the follow-up question. I'm pretty sure the member opposite, being responsible, wouldn't want us to approve funding for a project until we receive and analyze the business case.

I'm not sure what lack of an answer the city of London could have suggested they had. I was very clear. It was a very cordial meeting. We have a great relationship, of course, with London, Speaker.

But I think this speaks to a larger issue, which is the very ambitious plan that our Premier and our government have to build Ontario up, including communities like London. It is precisely because of the leadership of this Premier and our London MPP, the deputy Premier and President of the Treasury Board—who has consistently stood up for her community—that we are making progress and that we are moving the province forward. Because of their leadership, we'll continue to partner with London to make sure that, once we get the business case, we get it right.

CONSUMER PROTECTION

Ms. Harinder Malhi: My question is to the Minister of Government and Consumer Services. My riding is home to several payday lenders, an increasingly popular

business model that offers short-term, high-interest loans. I understand the demand for this type of business model is increasing and many Ontarians do not have the option to borrow money from banks or their families. However, I'm also concerned for Ontarians who find themselves in debt cycles by relying on these services too regularly.

My constituents want a regulatory framework that ensures they have access to the services they need without being subject to harmful practices. I know that our government took an important step by passing the Payday Loans Act in 2008, after the federal government down-loaded responsibility to the province.

Mr. Speaker, can the minister please inform the House how his ministry is addressing these concerns and what protections Ontarians can count on from our government?

Hon. David Oraziotti: I want to thank the member from Brampton–Springdale for the question and for her strong advocacy on behalf of her constituents.

I certainly understand the member's question with regard to payday loans and can assure all the members of the House that we continue to make progress on protecting vulnerable consumers.

The Payday Loans Act guarantees that all loan agreements are presented in writing, caps the total cost of borrowing and ensures that payday lenders cannot roll one loan into another. When certain licensees tried to evade these rules, we took appropriate enforcement action.

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We also understand, Speaker, that with new technology and continuing evolving business practices in this sector, it's important for our government to improve legislation. That's why we consulted in municipalities across Ontario and enlisted the advice of an expert panel to review the regulations. We are moving forward with Bill 156, the Alternative Financial Services Statute Law Amendment Act, which was introduced in December.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Harinder Malhi: Thank you to the Minister of Government and Consumer Services for the steps that his ministry has taken to protect vulnerable consumers in Ontario.

Like many Ontarians, I am pleased to see the minister introduce new legislation to protect consumers who use alternative financial services. I understand that this legislation is based on panel recommendations and that the minister had asked the panel to expand its report to address services beyond payday loans. With an increased prominence of instalment loans, rent-to-own agreements, cheque cashing services and debt collection services in Ontario, it's important for new legislation to protect consumers who are using a range of alternative financial services.

Mr. Speaker, can the minister please update the House on his recently introduced legislation and the enhanced regulations it will create, if passed?

Hon. David Oraziotti: Again, I want to thank the member from Brampton–Springdale for the supplement-

ary. As the member noted, the Alternative Financial Services Statute Law Amendment Act was informed by expert panel recommendations and extensive consultations with consumers and community agencies right across Ontario. If passed, the legislation will help protect vulnerable consumers by improving debt collection rules. It will help by capping the rate of cheque cashing. It will also limit repayment on rent-to-own agreements and limit optional insurance costs for added instalment loans, as well as adding a seven-day waiting period between payday loans.

Speaker, I'll continue working with local stakeholders and community leaders to ensure that we develop strong regulations to protect consumers in Ontario. This important work, in addition to our government's outreach to credit unions and banks as safe alternatives to payday lenders, will play an important role in protecting and educating consumers across Ontario.

I encourage all members of the Legislature to support Bill 156.

ONTARIO BUDGET

Mr. Steve Clark: My question is to the Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport. For Ontario's film and television industry, last year's budget was a horror flick. Cuts to the production services tax credit and the computer animation and special effects tax credit jeopardized future investment in a \$1.29-billion industry that supports 31,000 jobs. Estimates put the annual lost revenue from foreign productions at over \$60 million.

I'm proud of our critic Laurie Scott, who was able to amend last year's budget and delay those cuts, saving jobs and investment by keeping productions here. But the minister should know the uncertainty is hurting Ontario's ability to attract new productions and grow the industry.

Speaker, will the minister provide the stability Ontario's film industry needs by confirming that tomorrow's budget won't slash these credits again?

Hon. Michael Coteau: I want to start by saying how proud we are of the cultural sector here in the province of Ontario. It's a \$22-billion sector and we're extremely proud of it.

We put those tax incentives in place so we could help grow the industry. We have our interactive digital tax credits—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The warning is still on, just to remind you.

Carry on.

Hon. Michael Coteau: We have our interactive digital tax credits. We have our music fund, which BC has just incorporated into their program, and we do have film and television tax credits. We saw a continued growth this year, up about 5% from the previous year, in accessing those tax credits, so we are investing more money.

Mr. Speaker, we should be very proud of our film and television tax credit and our cultural sector here in the

province of Ontario. I hope the member opposite will join us in saying how successful it is here in the province.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Steve Clark: My supplementary is back to the minister.

The minister has memorized his lines, but I think he needs a better script. He can't have this uncertainty year after year. There is just too much competition.

Last week's BC budget reaffirmed support for film tax credits and committed the government to working with the industry. That kind of support and the stability it creates gets the attention from producers.

Meanwhile, questions about the tax credits' future in Ontario is the number one obstacle to recruiting new productions. There won't be any more "Action" if we think the government will yell "Cut." Only a multi-year agreement provides the stability to grow our creative economy. Speaker, will the—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I find it hard to understand that the first time I announced that the warning was still on, it happens again. So I'm going to remind this side. Please.

Please finish and wrap up.

Mr. Steve Clark: Thank you very much, Speaker. My question is very simple: Will the minister form a working group with the industry to strike this agreement and make Ontario the premier destination for film and TV production outside of LA?

Hon. Michael Coteau: As the member knows, we're doing a cultural strategy right across the province of Ontario. We have an advisory committee, to me and to this government, to talk about ways to really leverage culture further.

Let's talk about music, for example. Last year, there was a Billboard top 10 where six Ontarians occupied the top 10 spots at the same time: Drake, Magic!, Shawn Mendes, Justin Bieber—this is the first time in the history of Ontario.

We are so proud of our cultural sector here in the province of Ontario. Instead of pulling them down and saying that we're not doing enough, he should be standing up and saying that this government is supporting the film and television tax credit and the cultural sector beyond any government before us.

Interjections.

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

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: My question is to the Minister of Health. Every day, the minister gets up and tries to deny that Liberals are cutting patient care. But patients and nurses in Windsor know what's really happening: The Liberals have frozen hospital budgets for four straight years, and that's forcing Windsor Regional Hospital to cut 169 registered nurses, more than 10% of its RN workforce. Now, American hospitals like Beaumont Health

System in Michigan have come to Windsor to hire nurses who have been cut from our hospitals. RNs are being interviewed one day and hired the very next. These nurses should be working in Ontario's hospitals, not being forced by this government's cuts to leave the country just to find work.

Can the minister tell us how many nurses who have been cut from our hospitals by this government have been hired by American hospitals that are only too thrilled to take our highly skilled and dedicated Ontario nurses?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: I appreciate the question. It gives me the opportunity to talk about Windsor Regional and helping, I think, the public understand—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I guess reminding people of warnings is not good enough, so the member from Kitchener–Waterloo is warned.

Carry on.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: So in the first instance, we did provide Windsor Regional Hospital with \$7 million in additional funding this year to help them address their budget pressures.

But the important thing, I think, to understand is that Windsor Regional Hospital is one of only a handful, only a few hospitals around the province that never made a transition to look at its nursing services from a holistic, comprehensive perspective; to understand that there is a role for RPNs, registered practical nurses, in our hospitals, for example; that there is a role for nurse practitioners; that there is a role for RNs. In fact, Windsor Regional Hospital is one of the only hospitals in the province that has up to date a 100% RN nursing workforce. They're working to change that mix so that it's most appropriate for the patients.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: Back to the Minister of Health. The Liberals' cuts to hospitals are devastating for patients and nurses in southwestern Ontario. There were 169 registered nurses cut in Windsor and even more front-line health care workers cut in Sarnia, Hamilton, Waterloo, London, St. Thomas—the list goes on.

Those cuts mean longer wait times for patients, more worry and stress for loved ones, and they leave our nurses feeling discouraged and frustrated by a government that just doesn't share the priorities of Ontarians. When nurses are laid off, families can't just pick up and move across the province to find a part-time casual nursing job somewhere else. Instead, these nurses in our border communities are forced to look to the private health care system in the US for jobs they can't get here at home.

When will the Liberals stop cutting our hospitals, stop pushing Ontario's nurses to take jobs in Michigan and start protecting patient care in all of our communities?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: I did mention that an additional \$7 million was applied and was provided to Windsor Regional Hospital last year. In fact, our funding in the last decade to that specific hospital has increased by

approximately 50%. So the funding does increase, and it doesn't include other substantial funding: the \$1.9 billion I referenced earlier this morning for decreasing wait times, some of that funding distributed to Windsor Regional as well.

But I think we should leave it to the experts, to the LHIN and the local leadership, as well, to make sure that the mix of nursing and other staff in the hospital truly meets the patient needs. It needs to be a patient-centred system. Windsor Regional is one, as I mentioned, of just a few hospitals around the province that haven't yet made that transition to recognizing and, quite frankly, respecting the role of our registered practical nurses in this province and understanding that they do have a role to play at our hospitals. Those are the changes they're trying to make.

1200

ABORIGINAL EDUCATION

Ms. Eleanor McMahon: My question is to the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities. Minister, our government has made a clear commitment to learn from the past, build on our success stories and increase our efforts to help aboriginal learners get the education and training they need. That is why it is imperative that we continue to collaborate with our aboriginal partners to support the programs and services that are responsive to the diverse needs of aboriginal learners across our province.

I understand that your ministry has made significant progress on this front since launching Ontario's Aboriginal Postsecondary Education and Training Policy Framework. Many constituents in my riding of Burlington, and indeed all Ontarians, are interested in knowing what our government is doing to increase aboriginal access to post-secondary education and skills training programs. Minister, can you please inform the members of this House on how your ministry is supporting aboriginal learners in Ontario by providing equal access to high-quality post-secondary education and skills training programs?

Hon. Reza Moridi: I would like to thank the member from Burlington for that question. I want to begin by saying, "Meegwetch." Our government is committed to providing high-quality post-secondary education and skills training for aboriginal people in Ontario. Last year we invested more than \$30 million in the Postsecondary Education Fund for Aboriginal Learners and an additional \$5 million to ensure that post-secondary education and training remains accessible at Ontario's nine aboriginal institutions.

Furthermore, through Ontario's aboriginal skills advancement program, we are collaborating with our aboriginal partners to support up to 100 post-secondary and training programs and investing \$3 million annually between 2015 and 2018 in the aboriginal skills advancement program in the Ring of Fire area. Later this year, my ministry will release a report to highlight what our

government is doing to improve quality and culturally relevant post-secondary and training opportunities for aboriginal communities.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Eleanor McMahon: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the minister for that answer. It is reassuring to know that our government is committed to providing high-quality post-secondary education and skills training to aboriginal Ontarians. Minister, partnerships are at the core of our government's efforts to increase access to opportunities for aboriginal people in this province. Investing in the talent and skills of First Nations, Métis and Inuit learners is one of the many steps of Ontario's journey of healing and reconciliation with indigenous peoples.

It is also important in terms of our economic development and our prosperity as a province. I understand that you recently visited Six Nations Polytechnic to make a historic announcement about aboriginal post-secondary education in Ontario. Minister, can you please tell us more about what you announced and how it supports our government's commitment to promote aboriginal post-secondary education in Ontario?

Hon. Reza Moridi: Again, I want to thank the member for that question. Our government strongly believes that the First Nations, Métis and Inuit learners deserve equal access to high-quality post-secondary education and skills training programs.

Just recently, I visited Six Nations Polytechnic with my colleague Minister Zimmer and yourself, Mr. Speaker, to announce that, for the first time in the history of this province, Six Nations Polytechnic would be able to offer a stand-alone bachelor of arts degree in Ojibwe languages, starting this year. I am proud to say that this stand-alone degree supports the recommendations of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's call for post-secondary institutions to create degree programs in aboriginal and indigenous languages. This is the first step in a plan to offer a four-year bachelor of arts degree in Ojibwe languages.

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

Mr. Randy Hillier: To the Premier: Last week, I questioned this government's commitment to protect women and their families from domestic violence, after two tragic events in my riding left four people dead and another severely injured, and another attempted murder in Bancroft. These events, along with the deaths of three women in Renfrew county last fall, should not be seen just as red flags but, indeed, as a crisis and this government's inability to protect women and their families from domestic violence. Speaker, there is a crisis in rural Ontario. When will the Premier provide more than just lipservice to women and families living in fear in Ontario?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I know that the minister responsible for women's issues will want to comment on the supplementary.

I will just say that it is in our very DNA as a government to make sure that we put in place protections for vulnerable people. The sexual assault and violence policy that we brought out, It's Never Okay, speaks to that. It speaks to our recognition that deep-seated misogyny in our culture demands that we take action. It demands that we change public awareness, that we put in place supports for victims of violence and that we improve the judicial system so that people will come forward.

I would suggest that the work that we're doing—I appreciate the work of the select committee. We are putting in supports around the issue of human trafficking. These are very important issues that we raised and we are acting on.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Randy Hillier: Again to the Premier: Last week, the response was that the rural realities program was the solution, \$1 million of funding over two years for rural realities. The reality is that in rural Ontario, \$1 million is a pittance without an ounce of protection or prevention for these women and their families, and it is certainly no cure. My colleagues from Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock, Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke and others have offered solutions, but all the Premier's office provides are platitudes and a pittance in return.

When will this Premier wake up and fix this government's failings in our courts, in our corrections, in our probation, in our parole and in law enforcement? These failings are adding up to one thing for sure: Many families in rural Ontario are living in fear, and you're doing nothing about it.

Interjections.

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

Premier?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: A model of restraint, Mr. Speaker.

I just want to say to the member opposite that, had he been paying attention yesterday, he would have seen that we actually put \$100 million into resources for tracking down and dealing with issues around missing and murdered indigenous women.

I am very pleased that the member opposite has had yet another epiphany. I am very pleased that he is supportive of the initiatives that we have put in place and that he recognizes that there is more to be done.

But I will not—I will not—take lessons from this member on how to invest in and how to support the women of this province. The policies that we have put in place are groundbreaking. They are policies that are being copied by other provinces across the country. There is more to be done. This is a decades-old issue. We're taking action. I look forward to his support as we move forward.

Interjections.

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

Mr. Randy Hillier: Point of order, Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): A point of order from the member from Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington.

Mr. Randy Hillier: Did the Premier mean to say, "Especially this member?"

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated. That's not appropriate.

VISITOR

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Premier?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Mr. Speaker, I'm sorry, in all of the introductions, I neglected to introduce Ingrid, who is here. Ingrid is the owner of the Swiss-Master Chocolatier in my riding at York Mills and Bayview. It is awesome chocolate and I encourage everyone to drop in.

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

There are no deferred votes. This House stands recessed until 3 p.m.

The House recessed from 1210 to 1500.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Arthur Potts: I had the opportunity to introduce them this morning, but they've come back this afternoon: representatives of the Canadian Men's Health Foundation. Welcome once again. We're going to introduce a bill a little later on and I'm glad you're here for it.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

DAVID MACKAY

Mr. Todd Smith: Earlier this month, the city of Belleville lost one of its greatest citizens, one of its most beloved businessmen, and I lost a good friend. David Mackay was described in the media as a man that people turned to when they needed help. Everything that we think about when we think about small business people, from personal service to active community support and philanthropy, was central to the David Mackay that I knew.

David got into the insurance business in 1965 in Sawyerville, Quebec. He founded Mackay Insurance Brokers in 1977 out of his basement with just 25 clients. Today, Mackay Insurance has more than 5,000 clients and 12 full-time staff: a true small business success story in Quinte.

To this day, you'll see Mackay Insurance sponsoring local minor sports teams; you'll see them participating in major community events. The people who worked for David Mackay proudly tell you about the impact that he had on their lives.

In his personal profile, David Mackay listed his family, his southern gospel music and the Belleville Bulls as the things he enjoyed most, and that's where I got to

know him. Over the more than 15 years I helped to call Bulls games, I talked to David Mackay countless times about our beloved Bullies. He was always free with a friendly opinion about Kevin Lalonde's rebounds, P. K. Subban's slapshot, or which side of the power play Jonathan Cheechoo should be on.

Last year, I had the great honour to present David with a scroll commemorating his 50th year in the insurance business.

Belleville lost an outstanding businessman, a tremendous citizen and a good friend when David Mackay died. To his kids, Bruce, Paul and Carol, and his grandchildren, know that David left his community a far better place than he found it and we're all grateful to him.

HOWARD PAWLEY

Mr. Percy Hatfield: At the end of my statement, I will be asking for unanimous consent for a moment of silence to honour a great Canadian.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I appreciate that from the member but, with his indulgence, I'll wait until all the statements are done and then come back to it.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: Thank you, Speaker.

Howard Pawley was born in Brampton, Ontario. He moved to Manitoba when he was 17. Howard joined the NDP and was elected in the riding of Selkirk in 1969. As I recall, he spent most of that campaign laid up in the hospital with a bad back after a rear-end car accident.

Premier Ed Schreyer—who, by the way, was the first cousin of Adele Pawley—named him to his cabinet. Howard was the minister who introduced a public auto insurance bill to Manitoba. He became leader of the party in 1979 and was elected Premier in 1981, replacing Sterling Lyon—and, by coincidence, Sterling Lyon was born in Windsor, Ontario.

During his first term, Howard Pawley ensconced French language rights into law, and he had to defend it all the way to the Supreme Court. He continued as a political warrior in his second term amid the national battles over the Meech Lake accord and the free trade act with the United States. He always fought for social justice and made sure that workers were paid fairly, regardless of gender, and he enshrined protection for sexual orientation in Manitoba's Human Rights Code.

Howard Pawley stepped down as Premier in 1988 and moved back to Ontario to teach at the University of Windsor in 1991. He was a man of outstanding moral fibre. He was kind and compassionate and made an outstanding contribution to our political science faculty. He retired in 2000 but he kept active, teaching when called upon at the university, and was active in many areas of social justice in our region.

Howard Pawley was truly a man of the people, full of endless optimism. He had blue eyes that just sparkled and the warmest smile you'd ever see. He helped our city restore order when controversy erupted at our public library board, and I was delighted as a city councillor to join Howard on that committee.

I was out of town when Howard passed during our winter break, but I want to say to Adele and the family, thank you for allowing Howard to spend so much of his time serving our community.

As a final note, when he was the Premier of Manitoba, he liked to remind us all that Canada had two serving Premiers from Brampton because Bill Davis was the Premier of Ontario at the same time.

632 PHOENIX ROYAL CANADIAN AIR CADET SQUADRON

Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde: Last Friday, I had the pleasure to attend the mess dinner of the 632 Phoenix Royal Canadian Air Cadet Squadron in celebration of their 25th anniversary.

More than 160 cadets are part of this squadron based in Orléans. These young Canadians, aged 12 to 18, participate in a variety of fun, challenging and rewarding activities. They learn valuable life skills and work skills, such as teamwork, leadership and citizenship.

I would like to congratulate their commanding officer, Major Jonathan McAuley, for his commitment and dedication to these exceptional young men and women.

It was enlightening to speak to some individuals who, at such a young age, already show leadership and speaking attributes. I was especially touched by a young woman by the name of Ashtyn Ribble. She is a cadet representative of her squadron in the effective speaking program. Her speech topic was about the 100-year anniversary of women's right to vote in our country, and I found out on Monday that she won regional and will be moving on to provincials in April.

All this is to say that we do have a bright future with our youth in Ontario, and I thought it important to specify this today as we show our commitment to eliminating bullying.

HALTON REGION

Mr. Ted Arnott: Last Friday morning, I joined the member for Burlington and the member for Halton at Halton regional headquarters in Oakville. We met at the invitation of regional chair Gary Carr. Also in attendance were senior staff of the region and the mayors of Halton, including Mayor Rick Bonnette. I wish to inform the House of some of the ideas and suggestions that were raised at the meeting.

Halton's response to the Patients First discussion paper must be carefully reviewed and considered by the Minister of Health before decisions on accountability and funding relationships between public health and the LHINs are made. The province needs to fulfill its commitment to cost-shared and 100% funded programs. We need changes to address ambulance offload delays and the implementation of the transfer of governance for the CCAC to Halton region.

We need to see that provincial funding assistance is available for Halton's public housing plans. We need

support for Halton's \$3.7-billion capital infrastructure plan.

We need the province to be a supportive partner in Halton's climate change mitigation programs.

We need provincial approval and investment in a new Wilfrid Laurier University campus in Milton, and we need recognition and understanding of the significant impacts the proposed CN logistics hub may leave on Halton.

Let us work together to make progress on these issues to ensure that the region of Halton continues to be a great place to live, work, raise a family and retire.

ORGAN DONATION

Mr. Michael Mantha: Today I want to take the opportunity to raise awareness about the importance of organ and tissue donation.

I also want to tell you about a friend and colleague of mine who just lost his 22-year-old son, Adam Prashaw. Adam was a brave and courageous young man diagnosed with epilepsy at a young age. He, like many of our children, didn't let that slow him down. He was fierce, stubborn and independent.

Despite two courageous brain surgeries, the epilepsy took Adam in the end. Adam drowned in a hot tub on Friday, January 22. Adam's family, his parents, siblings and his community of friends are still grieving this enormous loss.

However, on Family Day last week, they received a letter from the Gift of Life Trillium Network confirming that the organs of Adam had saved four people in terminal stages of heart, liver and kidney failure. Everyone who knew Adam knew of his generous and caring spirit. This was so typical of Adam, that, even in his death, he was giving to others. Nothing can diminish the loss of your loved ones, but many families are comforted knowing they have given this life to others.

1510

This is a gift that we all can give, and a gift that, hopefully, our loved ones can receive. Currently, there are over 1,500 people in this province waiting to receive life-saving organ transplants. Thousands more are waiting for life-enhancing tissue transplants.

I want to send my deepest condolences to Adam's loved ones. You must be so proud of him and his gift of life.

I encourage everyone here in this room to visit the website www.beadonor.ca and fill out your donor registration and consent form. You could give a gift of life.

INTERNATIONAL DAY OF PINK

Mr. Han Dong: I'm pleased to stand in the House today to recognize Pink Shirt Day. As we all know, a safe, inclusive, accepting school environment is essential for students to succeed in the classroom and beyond.

That is why, today, thousands of students and educators across Ontario and throughout the country will be recognizing Pink Shirt Day.

I'm proud to say that many schools in my riding of Trinity-Spadina will be embracing Pink Shirt Day and its message of bullying prevention and awareness. I want to take this opportunity to say to my daughter Emma and my son Matthew, who are studying at Lord Lansdowne Public School, I'm proud of you for the respect you show to your fellow students and your teachers.

Mr. Speaker, this important cause furthers student acceptance and demonstrates leadership in the community. We know that bullying and intimidation has an immediate impact on the well-being of our children and our youth and their ability to succeed in school. That is why Pink Shirt Day is so important.

I want to thank every member of this House today for their recognition of and participation in Pink Shirt Day, and continue to promote the success and the well-being of all our students.

TEAM 1305

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Students in my riding are again gearing up to challenge the world in the field of robotics. Team 1305, the Near North Student Robotics Initiative, will be launching their robot this week in advance of the North Bay regional competition being held at Nipissing University later in March. Some 33 teams, including two from China and one from New York state, along with others from Ontario and Quebec, will be locking their mechanical horns to see whose creation is superior.

This year's theme is FIRST Stronghold. Last year, Team 1305, or Ice Cubed, as they're also known, qualified for the world championship in St. Louis after capturing the Chairman's Award. This is the 16th year for the Near North Student Robotics Initiative, and it wouldn't be possible without the volunteer mentoring efforts of people in our community like Anthony Koziol and Bev Carmichael, both of whom were recognized with awards at last year's regional event in North Bay.

I'm looking forward to attending 1305's launch on Friday and witnessing the ingenuity and innovative skills our students in Nipissing have to offer. They have also been huge mentors to our First Nations community in my riding and have encouraged them as well to enter teams in the last couple of years. It has been very exciting.

I hope members of this House will take the time to get out and support their local robotics team in the weeks ahead.

ONTARIO TRILLIUM FOUNDATION

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti: I am pleased to rise today to highlight two programs in my riding of Scarborough Southwest that recently received funding through the Ontario Trillium Foundation grant program. The Warden Woods Community Centre and Mural Routes have helped residents in my riding stay healthy, active and

engaged in their community for many years. This new funding will help them to continue and expand on their significant contributions.

Mural Routes is receiving a grant of \$565,100 over 35 months to help fund the Mural Art Learning Institute, known as MURALI, and to improve upon its continuum of mural-making teaching programs. Warden Woods Community Centre is receiving a grant of \$314,200 over 35 months to grow Active Boost, a program that promotes physical activity and healthy eating. Together, these programs will positively impact the lives of thousands of residents in Scarborough Southwest and beyond Scarborough Southwest.

In the coming weeks, I'll be visiting both Mural Routes and Warden Woods to celebrate the new funding and to get a first-hand look at the incredible work that they're doing in the Scarborough Southwest community.

These are two very deserving programs, Mr. Speaker. I'm thrilled to see them receive this vital support and I very much look forward to seeing them continue to improve the lives of people in the riding of Scarborough Southwest and beyond.

MUNICIPALITIES

Mr. Grant Crack: I'm pleased to rise this afternoon to acknowledge another successful Ontario Good Roads Association and Rural Ontario Municipal Association combined conference down at the Royal York hotel.

Over the past three days, I was proud to welcome nine mayors, two wardens and many councillors from my great riding of Glengarry–Prescott–Russell who made the trip to Toronto again in 2016 to this important annual event.

As a former mayor myself, Speaker, I know that this yearly conference is an excellent occasion for representatives from rural Ontario to highlight the issues and discuss policy to strengthen their communities and also the province.

Over the course of these days, ministers, parliamentary assistants like Marie-France Lalonde from Ottawa–Orléans and members were able to hear about local investment and growth opportunities and priorities throughout my great riding of Glengarry–Prescott–Russell.

Ministers met with delegations from the town of Hawkesbury, East Hawkesbury, the village of Casselman, Nation municipality, the township of Russell, the township of North Glengarry, the city of Clarence-Rockland, the township of Alfred and Plantagenet, Champlain township, the united counties of Prescott and Russell, the united counties of Stormont, Dundas and Glengarry, and the Eastern Ontario Wardens' Caucus and the mayors' committee.

It's always an honour to have Ontario's Premier attend this important conference. Premier Wynne reaffirmed our commitment to providing Ontario's small and rural municipalities with expanded access to predictable, stable

funding in building and repairing our roads, our bridges, our water and waste water infrastructure.

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

Mr. Grant Crack: I'm proud of this government's dedication and commitment to our municipal—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. A gentle reminder that when I stand, you sit.

With the indulgence of the member from Windsor–Tecumseh, he's seeking unanimous consent to use a moment of silence for the passing of his constituent. Do we agree? Agreed. Please stand, everybody, for a moment of silence in tribute to Howard Pawley.

The House observed a moment's silence.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Pray be seated.

I am going to take an opportunity here to do a little housekeeping, so I wish that members and staff pay close attention to these two issues. Inside of these two issues it's sensitive, and I appreciate your indulgence and your patience with what I want to remind you of.

USE OF MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Number one, in the statements from members, it's evolved beyond what people would normally do, and that is to brag about their riding. That's the intent. I have been gracious, I think, in terms of when people approach me and say that they want to talk about someone special, they want to do an honour of an individual who either achieved something wonderful that is apolitical or a tribute to them in depth. I have been patient and allowed over the 1:30.

However, I've also indicated to the members—and I'll repeat myself—if there is a bragging about a government issue or if there is a condemnation of a government issue, it better be done inside the 1:30, or I'll cut you off. I may have to force myself to simply say 1:30 and that's it. I'd prefer not to. I'd prefer to provide you with the time that's necessary, as long as it's not too long, to pay tribute to someone who needs a little bit more than 1:30 to do. So I'm asking for your indulgence.

USE OF TRIBUTES

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The second point is even more sensitive. There is actually a protocol and a convention that House leaders have agreed upon when we do moments of silence and when we lower the flags and all those kinds of things. I would ask that all members make sure their House leaders are informed of those tributes prior to, to arrange an agreement that they're going to have that happen.

1520

Regrettably, people die all the time. We could be standing doing tributes to everybody. We do have a protocol that's already agreed upon, so I'm going to be sensitive to this, but I'm asking that you try to fulfill that. I would appreciate your participation in helping us achieve that. Thank you very much. I appreciate it.

VISITOR

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

Ms. Catherine Fife: I just wanted to quickly introduce Thomas Dang. Thomas Dang is the youngest member of Parliament ever elected in the province of Alberta. He represents the riding of Edmonton–South West. Welcome to Queen’s Park, Thomas.

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON
REGULATIONS AND PRIVATE BILLS

Ms. Indira Naidoo-Harris: I beg leave to present a report from the Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills and move its adoption.

The Clerk-at-the-Table (Mr. William Short): Your committee begs to report the following bills, without amendment:

Bill Pr32, An Act respecting the Association of Municipal Managers, Clerks and Treasurers of Ontario.

Bill Pr33, An Act to revive Stephanie Holdings Ltd.

Bill Pr35, An Act to revive 1709542 Ontario Corporation.

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

Report adopted.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

CAPPING ONTARIO’S DEBT ACT, 2016
LOI DE 2016 SUR LE PLAFONNEMENT
DE LA DETTE DE L’ONTARIO

Mr. McNaughton moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 168, An Act to amend the Financial Administration Act / Projet de loi 168, Loi modifiant la Loi sur l’administration financière.

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

First reading agreed to.

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

Mr. Monte McNaughton: The Capping Ontario’s Debt Act, 2016: The Financial Administration Act is amended to provide that the crown is not authorized to raise money by way of loan or to receive money through the issue and sale of securities if the effect of doing so would cause Ontario’s net debt to exceed 45% of its gross domestic product.

TRANS DAY OF REMEMBRANCE
ACT, 2016LOI DE 2016 SUR LA JOURNÉE
DU SOUVENIR TRANS

Ms. DiNovo moved first reading of the following bill:
Bill 169, An Act to proclaim the Trans Day of Remembrance / Projet de loi 169, Loi proclamant la Journée du souvenir trans.

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.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: The bill proclaims November 20 in each year as the Trans Day of Remembrance. The bill requires members of the Legislative Assembly to observe a moment of silence in honour of trans folk who have died as a result of anti-trans violence.

MEN’S HEALTH AWARENESS WEEK
ACT, 2016LOI DE 2016 SUR LA SEMAINE
DE LA SENSIBILISATION À LA SANTÉ
DES HOMMES

Mr. Potts moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 170, An Act to proclaim the week immediately preceding the third Sunday in June as Men’s Health Awareness Week / Projet de loi 170, Loi proclamant la semaine précédant le troisième dimanche de juin Semaine de la sensibilisation à la santé des hommes.

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

First reading agreed to.

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

Mr. Arthur Potts: This bill, if passed, will proclaim the week immediately preceding Father’s Day as Men’s Health Awareness Week. By doing so, the province will be recognizing the importance of attaining and maintaining positive health outcomes for men across the province for the betterment of communities, families and all Ontarians.

HIGHWAY TRAFFIC AMENDMENT
ACT (WASTE COLLECTION VEHICLES
AND SNOW PLOWS), 2016LOI DE 2016 MODIFIANT LE CODE
DE LA ROUTE (VÉHICULES DE COLLECTE
DES DÉCHETS ET CHASSE-NEIGE)

Mr. Harris moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 171, An Act to amend the Highway Traffic Act with respect to waste collection vehicles and snow plows / Projet de loi 171, Loi modifiant le Code de la route en ce qui concerne les véhicules de collecte des déchets et les chasse-neige.

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

First reading agreed to.

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

Mr. Michael Harris: Today, I introduce the Highway Traffic Amendment Act with respect to waste collection vehicles and snow plows, 2016, to extend the restrictions on approaching stopped emergency vehicles or tow trucks to approaching a stopped road service vehicle. It also extends those restrictions to vehicles in the course of collecting garbage or material for disposal or recycling from the side of a highway, and road service vehicles that are used to plow, salt or de-ice a highway.

CLIMATE CHANGE MITIGATION
AND LOW-CARBON ECONOMY
ACT, 2016

LOI DE 2016 SUR L'ATTÉNUATION
DU CHANGEMENT CLIMATIQUE
ET UNE ÉCONOMIE SOBRE EN CARBONE

Mr. Murray moved first reading of the following bill:
Bill 172, An Act respecting greenhouse gas / Projet de loi 172, Loi concernant les gaz à effet de serre.

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 minister for a short statement.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: I am pleased to rise to introduce the proposed Climate Change Mitigation and Low-carbon Economy Act. The legislation, if passed, will move forward with many important initiatives related to introducing a cap-and-trade program in this province and effectively combating climate change.

Targets are established for the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions, and the Ontario government is required to prepare a climate change action plan, setting out actions that will enable Ontario to achieve those targets; the Ministry of the Environment and Climate Change is required to prepare periodic progress reports with respect to the action plan; a framework for Ontario's cap-and-trade program is established; and the minister is authorized to enter into agreements with others for the harmonization and integration of the cap-and-trade program under this act and similar programs.

In concluding, Mr. Speaker, would you allow me to thank several folks in the gallery: Myra Hewitt and Laura Nemchin, legal counsel branch; Alex Wood, executive director; David Harth, senior policy adviser, who has provided such excellent leadership; and two colleagues in my office, Iain Myrans and Kajanath Thiru, who have been working incredibly hard on this.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): That was much better. I'm asking all people to come toward the statements inside the explanatory notes, and it sounded like that was the case. Nothing else should be done, because

the rest of it is left for debates, whether it's introductions or comments about the value or lack of value of those bills.

Thank you for being co-operative on that. Again, it's one more thing to keep in your back pocket to remember how we make this place work.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY
AND RESPONSES

BLACK HISTORY MONTH

Hon. Michael Coteau: On this important month and day, I'd like to start by acknowledging that we're on the traditional territory of the Mississaugas of the New Credit.

I rise today in the Legislature to acknowledge and celebrate that February is Black History Month. As you know, earlier this year, on January 25, our government officially proclaimed February 2016 as Black History Month in Ontario through the Lieutenant Governor's proclamation. This proclamation recognizes the vital role that the black community has played within the social and cultural mosaic of this province.

1530

Just last week, our government formally introduced a bill to establish February as Black History Month in Ontario on an annual basis. I'm proud of our government's leadership on this bill, and I'm also proud that it received support from all members in this Legislature. Thank you. This was truly a great occasion that transcended party lines, and it was wonderful to see all members in the Legislature come together to support this important legislation.

I want to acknowledge the efforts of the member from Scarborough-Rouge River, MPP Balkissoon, who introduced a private member's bill back in 2007, and again in 2009, to give this important month the recognition it deserves.

I also want to take the opportunity to acknowledge the hard work of the Ontario Black History Society and the many other stakeholders who have been part of this process for years and who joined us last week on this historic occasion. It was a great moment in our province, and I'm pleased that so many people turned out to support it.

Mr. Speaker, I want to support the staff at the Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Sport for their continued work, and their efforts to make sure that this bill came into the Legislature and was successful in passing. Of course, the Black History Month Act, 2016, recognizes and celebrates the important contributions black Canadians have made in the history of this great province.

Black History Month was officially recognized in Canada in the early 1950s, when the Canadian Negro Women's Association petitioned Toronto city council. Nearly four decades ago, the Ontario Black History

Society initiated a formal celebration of February as Black History Month within the city of Toronto. That was back in 1979.

The growth and increasing acknowledgement of Black History Month in Ontario over the years owes a great deal to the society's hard work and dedication. Just 23 years ago, Ontario first proclaimed February as Black History Month, and this was done on the 200th anniversary of a law banning the importation of slaves into Upper Canada, a law which ultimately provided for the gradual ending of slavery.

Each year since then, the members of this House rise together to recognize the second month of each year as an occasion for everyone to celebrate the accomplishments of black Canadians and their contributions to our province's economy, our history and our culture. It's important that we pay tribute to this rich legacy.

But while we have celebrated February as Black History Month each year, it has not had official status here in Ontario. In 1995, the House of Commons of Canada officially recognized February as Black History Month, following a motion introduced by the first black Canadian woman elected to Parliament, the honourable Jean Augustine, MP for Etobicoke–Lakeshore. The motion was supported by all members of the House of Commons.

But only two provinces, British Columbia and Quebec, have had their own legislation—until now. This legislation is especially significant in Ontario because we are one of the most diverse and multicultural provinces in the federation. Ontario is characterized by its diverse and distinct culture, which strengthens and really brings us together based on our cultural ties. It is a society that continues to build itself on the diversity and heritage values that we hold dear to our hearts.

Recognizing and remembering our heritage through events like Black History Month helps us protect, preserve and promote our shared legacy. It helps us to remember who we are. Perhaps most important of all, it brings us closer together. We would be less than we are if we didn't recognize the accomplishments of black Ontarians. A fundamental part of Ontario's history has been the history of the black community.

I don't think many people in Ontario realize, but the first black man who arrived in Canada was back in 1603. His name was Mathieu Da Costa, and he arrived with Samuel de Champlain and acted as a translator between the explorers and the Mi'kmaq. At this time, for nearly two more centuries, slavery existed in Canada. In fact, the first recorded slave here in Canada was a seven-year-old from Madagascar back in 1628.

In 1793 the Upper Canada abolition act, supported by Lieutenant-Governor Simcoe, was enacted, making it illegal to bring slaves to Upper Canada, which made Canada the first jurisdiction in the British Empire to move towards the ending of slavery.

Many black Loyalists came here after the American Revolution and settled in the Maritimes, and black Canadian soldiers fought for this land during wars as far back as 1812.

Between 1800 and 1865, when the Civil War came to an end, we saw 30,000 black people escape to Canada using the Underground Railroad. One of the leaders of this movement was Harriet Tubman, who helped people flee slavery to find freedom here in Ontario. Tubman, herself a former slave, lived for 10 years in the beautiful riding of St. Catharines.

While many Ontarians know the name of Harriet Tubman, they may not be familiar with names like Josiah Henson, a former slave from Maryland who escaped to Canada with his family in 1830 and settled near present-day Dresden. His life inspired Harriet Beecher Stowe to write the novel *Uncle Tom's Cabin*.

Ontarians also may not know the name of Anderson Ruffin Abbott of Toronto, who in 1861 became the first black doctor; or Mary Ann Shadd, founder of the *Provincial Freeman* newspaper in Chatham back in 1853 and the first black woman in North America to become a publisher and the first female publisher in Canada; or Willie O'Ree, the NHL's first black hockey player.

Many may not know of the black volunteers back in 1812 who fought at Queenston Heights and Fort George, and other black Canadian men and women who defended Canada throughout its proud history. Black soldiers have fought in every single war this country has had.

There are many other stories, such as the black settlement stories across Ontario like that of the Queen's Bush Settlement back in the early 19th century in an area between Lake Huron and Waterloo county. More than 1,500 slaves and former slaves established farms throughout the region, building churches, schools and a strong, vibrant community life.

There are stories of inspiration and hope, like that of the Puce River black community near Windsor. The black community of Puce River was one of the first settled in Ontario by blacks in the early 1800s. Many former slaves found their way to Puce River and the town of Lakeshore through the Underground Railroad. This was a long journey, but many slaves came to Canada because they could find freedom.

For centuries, black Canadians have played a proud role in helping to build our economic, political, social and cultural landscape here in this province. Black History Month is an important way to learn where we have been and to reflect on where we are now.

Because of Black History Month celebrations, generations of Ontarians have grown up with a better understanding of the contributions that black Canadians have made in this province and in this country. From Nova Scotia to Ontario, and later out to western Canada, black Canadians have been part of Canada's story from the early days. Today, there are nearly a million black Canadians throughout our country, most of them in Ontario.

My parents arrived in Canada when I was a child. They chose to make Ontario their home because they knew that this was, and remains, one of the best places in the world to live, a place where people can come, they can find opportunity, they can build a life and they can grow and maybe one day have their son running a bank or being a member in the provincial Parliament—

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: Premier of Ontario.

Hon. Michael Coteau: Premier of Ontario—or Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport.

This is the same promise that drew black Canadians to Canada over the last few hundred years and it's part of our proud history as Ontarians. It's an enriched history, with political contributions from people like Lincoln Alexander, the first black member of Parliament; Senator Anne Cools, the first black senator in Canada; and of course Dr. Alvin Curling, the first Caribbean Canadian Speaker of the Ontario Legislature. My colleague Bas Balkissoon succeeded Alvin as the MPP for Scarborough–Rouge River. His legacy, along with the legacy of others like former MPP Zanana Akande, the first black woman elected to the Ontario Legislature—we need to remember the legacy of these Canadians who have done so much to make sure that we can continue to build this great province.

1540

We look at today, Mr. Speaker, and we look into the past. We know people in music, like Oscar Peterson, and today people like Drake, who is the number one streamed artist on the planet, The Weeknd, and of course people like Cameron Bailey, who is the artistic director for TIFF.

I think, as a black Canadian, and I know that my colleagues here in the Legislature would agree with me, that black Canadians have played a significant role in the development of this province and will continue to play that role. I just want to thank all the members for supporting this historic legislation. I want to thank the Premier for making sure that this was an item she thought was something we should move forward on to recognize the contribution of black Canadians here in the Legislature. I just want to say thank you to everyone for this opportunity.

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

Mr. Ted Arnott: I'm very pleased to have the opportunity to respond on behalf of the official opposition to this ministerial statement as once again in this House we acknowledge February as Black History Month in the province of Ontario. I gave a rather lengthy speech about this issue when we discussed the bill last week, which I won't repeat, but I was very pleased to join the Premier, the member for Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound and others at the Lieutenant Governor's suite last Tuesday to be present for the royal assent of Bill 159, An Act to proclaim the month of February as Black History Month.

Earlier that day, as you'll recall, Mr. Speaker, the bill had received the unanimous support of the House and actually received first, second, and third reading in one day, a remarkable example of all-party co-operation. I would add that my friend the member for Scarborough–Rouge River deserves enormous credit for initially suggesting the idea of enshrining Black History Month in the statutes of Ontario back in 2007 and 2009.

Why is all this important? We receive the answer from Rosemary Sadlier, who for more than 20 years served as

the president of the Ontario Black History Society. Rosemary wrote that the annual observation of black history is important for young African Canadians who need to “feel affirmed, to be aware of the contributions made by other blacks in Canada, have role models, and understand the social forces that have shaped and influenced their community.”

For all of us in this House and in communities across the province, Black History Month serves as a reminder of the compelling life stories which inspire and compel: inspire us to be worthy of the province we've inherited through the extraordinary accomplishment, courage and sacrifice of the generations who came before us; and compel us to take action in our daily lives and to speak out against the last vestiges of racism, injustice and intolerance wherever they may still exist.

Black history is Ontario's history, and together we look to a future, as Martin Luther King Jr. so eloquently dreamed, where everyone—everyone—will be judged not “by the colour of their skin but by the content of their character.”

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Further responses? *Interjection.*

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): There's more time, so I'm just offering them an opportunity.

The member from London–Fanshawe for responses.

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: On behalf of the NDP caucus, it is my pleasure to rise to lend our voice to the celebration of Black History Month. This year, 2016, marks the 20th anniversary since Black History Month was first officially celebrated by the government of Canada. The month-long celebration was formally recognized following a motion introduced in the House of Commons by the first black Canadian woman elected to Parliament, the Honourable Jean Augustine.

We also humbly recognize that this coming August 1 will mark the 182nd anniversary of the abolishment of slavery in Canada. As Canadians, we are proud to have been a haven to those seeking refuge from the practice of slavery. The Underground Railroad brought between 30,000 and 40,000 black slaves north to freedom in Canada, with many of them settling in southern Ontario and Atlantic Canada, specifically Nova Scotia. The settlement and history of African and Caribbean Canadians is a defining facet to our identity as a country and as a society.

Black History Month in Ontario provides us with a month full of opportunities to reflect and celebrate the notable black Canadians from so many fields who have played defining roles in our history. We are truly humbled and grateful for the contributions of black Canadians, from Harriet Tubman, the runaway slave from Maryland who became known as the Moses of her people and the conductor who led hundreds of slaves to freedom along the Underground Railroad, to Lincoln Alexander, who was appointed Ontario's 24th Lieutenant Governor, the first member of a visible minority to serve as the Queen's representative in Canada.

Black History Month is an essential celebration; however, it is important for us to go beyond just the

celebration and open our eyes to the realities of the lived experiences of black people in our community today. There are incredible stories in the black community of strength, courage and perseverance in the face of adversity that date back to the beginning of time, and that are not found in our history books. Sadly, these are not the lessons often taught in our elementary or secondary schools. From the story of black employees on the Canadian railways fighting discrimination to the overrepresentation of blacks within our criminal justice system, we must strive to paint an accurate picture of the black experience in Canada and record it, engrain it into the very fabric of our curriculums.

Because if we look, there are signs out there we have not learned the lessons from the past that we believe we have. The rise of the Black Lives Matter campaign is a key example. This campaign emerged as a direct response to the police shootings of black men in the US. Here in Toronto, the campaign is highlighting the problems of racial profiling through the use of carding. On one hand, we can understand this as a movement of empowerment and engagement; on the other hand, it is rooted in resistance to the anti-black racism that still exists in today's society.

I challenge each and every one of us here in this Legislature and everyone else in this province and country to take personal responsibility for promoting the elimination of the very real, day-to-day, systemic and institutionalized barriers faced by black people in our communities. While the newly announced Anti-Racism Directorate is a most welcome announcement that will help to address many of these barriers, the fact that the directorate is deemed as necessary by thousands of Ontarians is living proof that while we have come a long way, we still have a long road ahead of us.

As this month draws to a close, I encourage all members to participate in the local and regional Black History Month celebrations in our communities. These celebrations can open your eyes to a thriving African and Caribbean culture in Canada, even under the most challenging circumstances.

I'm very proud to be the citizenship and immigration critic and to respond today to Black History Month.

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

PETITIONS

DRIVER LICENCES

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

"Whereas many residents and businesses in Ontario rely on the ability to drive a vehicle in order to work, buy food and otherwise function;

"Whereas licence suspension upon receipt of a medical notice to that effect is immediate; and

"Whereas constituents are forced to wait 30 business days following a positive medical review by their physician prior to being reinstated; and

"Whereas this wait time is not prescribed in any legislation or regulation, but is solely due to Ministry of Transportation policies that ignore the reality of living and operating a business, especially in rural and northern Ontario; and

"Whereas a needlessly long licence suspension threatens the livelihoods of many families in Ontario;

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

"To direct the Ministry of Transportation to institute a five-business-day service guarantee for drivers' licence reinstatements following the submission of a positive physician's review."

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

1550

RURAL SCHOOLS

Mr. Taras Natyshak: I'm pleased to introduce this petition signed by 740 members of my community, "To preserve community schools," which reads:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas it is right for Ontario youth to be educated in their home communities;

"Whereas accessible schools that students can walk, bike or take a short ride to promote healthy lifestyles, a cleaner environment and emotional well-being;

"Whereas the economies of small rural towns are directly strengthened and vitalized by high schools in their own communities;

"Whereas community schools best serve special populations;

"Whereas rural high schools more than 15 km from the next high school should be considered eligible for enhanced top-up funding;

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

"To direct support and resources to Ontario rural community schools, such as Harrow District High School, so as to provide and sustain accessible education for youth within their home communities, preserving and sustaining rural town culture that diversifies the fabric of the province of Ontario."

I couldn't agree more. I will affix my name to the petition and send it to the Clerks' table via page Suzanne.

HOME INSPECTION INDUSTRY

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

"Whereas the home inspector industry remains largely unregulated; and

"Whereas homeowners are increasingly reliant on home inspectors to make an educated home purchase; and

“Whereas the unregulated industry poses a risk to consumers;

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

“To protect consumers by regulating the home inspection industry and licensing home inspectors.”

I agree with the petition and will leave it with Erin to take to the table.

PRIVATIZATION OF PUBLIC ASSETS

Mr. Rick Nicholls: A petition 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 approve of this petition, and I send it along with the wonderful page from Chatham–Kent–Essex, Delaney.

RURAL SCHOOLS

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario. It represents people in the member from Essex’s riding, as well as my own. It’s signed by five of 10 school board trustees.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas it is right for Ontario youth to be educated in their home communities;

“Whereas accessible schools that students can walk, bike or take a short ride to promote healthy lifestyles, a cleaner environment and emotional well-being;

“Whereas the economies of small rural towns are directly strengthened and vitalized by high schools in their own communities;

“Whereas community schools best serve special populations;

“Whereas rural high schools more than 15 km from the next high school should be considered eligible for enhanced top-up funding;

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

“To direct support and resources to Ontario rural community schools, such as Harrow District High School, so as to provide and sustain accessible education for youth within their home communities, preserving and sustaining rural town culture that diversifies the fabric of the province of Ontario.”

I fully support this petition, and will sign it and send it to the Clerks’ table.

WATER FLUORIDATION

Mrs. Cristina Martins: It gives me pleasure to rise in the House this afternoon to read this petition addressed to the Ontario Legislative Assembly:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

I agree with this petition. I’ll affix my name and send it to the table with page Sarah.

HEALTH CARE FUNDING

Ms. Sylvia Jones: I’m receiving more petitions.

“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 support this petition, affix my name to it and give it to page Xavier to take to the table.

WAY-FINDING SIGNS

Mr. Michael Mantha: My petition is titled "For Way-Finding Signs on MTO Roads in Northern Ontario.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the MTO currently does not allow established trail way-finding signs on MTO highways, and way-finding signs are helpful in guiding cyclists in northern Ontario where we often have no other options than using MTO roads;

"Whereas cycling tourism has become a significant part of Manitoulin's tourist economy, with an established network of cycling routes, many of which cannot be done without travelling on portions of MTO highways;

"Whereas Manitoulin's economic development hinges on making tourists feel welcome and safe;

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

"To allow way-finding signs on MTO roads in northern Ontario and to immediately allow a pilot project of way-finding signs on MTO road sections of cycling routes found in MICA's Manitoulin Island and LaCloche Mountains Cycling Routes and Road Map."

I agree with this petition, put my name to it and give it to page Erin to bring it down to the Clerks' table.

CAREGIVERS

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Northumberland-Quinte West. I saw you.

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: Good, good. I'm not very tall, Speaker, so I have to stand on my tippytoes.

I have a petition here. Actually, it's bilingual, but in lieu of my French capabilities, I'll stick to the English version.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas there are over 2.6 million caregivers to a family member, a friend or a neighbour in Ontario;

"Whereas these caregivers work hard to provide care to those that are most in need even though their efforts are often overlooked;

"Whereas one third of informal caregivers are distressed, which is twice as many as four years ago;

"Whereas without these caregivers, the health care system and patients would greatly suffer in Ontario;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to support MPP Gélinas's bill to proclaim the first Tuesday of every April as Family Caregiver Day to increase recognition and awareness of family caregivers in Ontario."

I will sign this petition and send it to the Clerk with Andrew.

HEALTH CARE FUNDING

Mrs. Julia Munro: "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've affixed my signature as I am in agreement.

1600

PRIVATIZATION OF PUBLIC ASSETS

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I have a petition entitled "Hydro One Not for Sale!" and it reads as follows:

"Petition 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 fully support this petition, affix my name to it and will give it to page Andrew to take to the table.

HYDRO RATES

Mr. Randy Hillier: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario for Hydro One networks.

"Whereas the cost of electricity in Ontario continues to escalate; and

"Whereas other charges associated with electricity, such as delivery, regulatory, global adjustment and debt retirement charges make electricity increasingly unaffordable; and

“Whereas these costs have imposed a significant hardship on ratepayers and driven industry and jobs out of Ontario;

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

“That the Premier and the Minister of Energy reduce the waste and duplication in Ontario’s electricity sector and take other necessary steps to lower the cost of electricity so that Ontario’s electricity prices are competitive with other jurisdictions.”

I’m firmly in favour of this petition and I will sign it and hand it off to the page.

RURAL SCHOOLS

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

“Whereas it is right for Ontario youth to be educated in their home communities;

“Whereas accessible schools that students can walk, bike or take a short ride to promote healthy lifestyles, a cleaner environment and emotional well-being;

“Whereas the economies of small rural towns are directly strengthened and vitalized by high schools in their own communities;

“Whereas community schools best serve special populations;

“Whereas rural high schools more than 15 km from the next high school should be considered eligible for enhanced top-up funding;

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

“To direct support and resources to Ontario rural community schools, such as Harrow District High School, so as to provide and sustain accessible education for youth within their home communities, preserving and sustaining rural town culture that diversifies the fabric of the province of Ontario.”

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

OPPOSITION DAY

ONTARIO BUDGET

Mr. Victor Fedeli: I move that:

Whereas the 2016 Ontario budget is soon to be introduced in the Legislature;

Whereas hydro bills have continued to skyrocket across the province, making it harder for seniors and families to get by;

Whereas the cost of the Liberal government’s scandals, waste and mismanagement is taking away funding for essential services;

Whereas the Liberal government’s cuts to front-line health care mean Ontario’s patients are being denied the quality health care they deserve; and

Whereas the Liberal government has no credible plan to balance the budget;

The Legislative Assembly of Ontario calls on the Liberal government to include the following in the 2016 Ontario budget:

(1) a credible plan to make energy affordable, which shall include halting any further sale of shares in Hydro One;

(2) a plan to properly manage Ontario’s health care system, which shall include reversing the current and planned cuts to doctors, nurses and hospitals; and

(3) a credible plan to balance the budget and take immediate action to pay down the debt.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Mr. Fedeli has moved opposition day number 1. Mr. Fedeli.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: I want to take some time to address each of our requests in detail, and talk about the concerns we heard during the pre-budget consultations.

Speaker, I start off by talking about the pre-budget consultations because all three parties, at some expense to the taxpayer, toured five cities outside of Toronto and then spent two days here in Toronto. We spent time in Hamilton, Windsor, Thunder Bay, Sault Ste. Marie, Ottawa and then back here in Toronto, listening to the people of Ontario, all the while the budget was being written, translated and printed without any input from the very people throughout the province who were going out of their way to come to these various hearings and tell us their stories.

It was very, very disheartening to see that the budget is being delivered tomorrow as opposed to the traditional time, after the federal budget, sometime in late March or April. They’ve rushed this budget and, sadly, did not listen to any of the people of Ontario.

Let me tell a story, Speaker, on the hydro. We’re talking about a credible plan to make energy affordable, which shall include halting any further sale of the shares of hydro.

Two days ago, I got a text and then a follow-up phone call from a friend of mine in Trout Creek, Ontario, in the south end of my riding. His name is Steve Ciglen. He runs a little shop in behind his house called Ciggies Custom Woodworking. I like to visit there. It’s a lot of fun. He has got a wonderful wife, Sheryl, two great kids, Braxton and Jayla. It’s a lot of fun going there. If anybody likes to tinker with woodworking, he has got a great little shop and a couple of employees.

He texted me and said, “Vic, my hydro bill this month is \$904.23.” If that’s not bad enough, if that doesn’t make your eyes roll, he was closed for a week, and then his power was shut off—as was mine at home—for five days. So you’ve got 12 days without power—we’re talking just a little over half a month—and his bill was \$904.23.

He said to me, “Vic, what am I going to do? This is quite a bit higher.” I said, “Steve, we talked before. I told you that these guys were going to put your hydro bill up on January 1 and take your 10% away.” That, of course, is indeed what happened, but it was just a shock.

We heard that a lot from people in our constituency offices. I'm pretty sure the government is getting the same phone calls we're getting, but they don't really seem to talk about those. Steve Ciglen said to me, "You know, Vic, I wanted to hire another guy in my shop, but I don't think I can." In fact, I talked to him today, when I asked for his permission to share the story and the amount of his power bill, and he said, "I've decided I can't hire that extra guy. I just can't."

We talked about the fact that we have the highest hydro rates in North America. Then he got on the other topics as well. He's just a small business guy with a couple of employees. We talked about the upcoming pension plan as well. He talked about the fact that with all of these extra costs, he just cannot see how he can expand. But it's the hydro bill that is just the clincher to put him over the edge. Somebody today doesn't have a job over that hydro bill that he received.

Our hydro rates have quadrupled since 2003. Business groups continue to complain we're uncompetitive. The Ontario Chamber of Commerce, in their latest report—when you see confidence in business tumbling from 47% down to 30% and lower, this has got to be a wake-up call to the government that something is wrong. Something is terribly wrong. When you've got the president and CEO, Sergio Marchionne, from Fiat Chrysler saying, "Ontario, you've become too high-cost a jurisdiction to do business." These are the messages.

1610

I can tell you an example in my hometown: Arclin. Now, when I was a young kid—this is a company that has been there almost 60 years—it was the Reichhold plant. It was Reichhold Chemicals. Everybody knew it. It was several city blocks, hundreds of employees, always there. It had just been a fixture in North Bay. Well, today, the lights are off. There's nothing there, just this empty shell of a company, no employees. They pulled out of North Bay. On the front page of the North Bay Nugget was a story that they pulled out because of hydro rates. They said that this plant in North Bay was the most expensive hydro of all of their 13 plants in North America, plain and simple.

When I travelled with MPP Rick Nicholls to his riding, we toured a greenhouse. This was a couple of years ago now. We toured this greenhouse and the owner was telling us the fact that he wanted to double the size of his facility, add 100 people and spend countless dollars building a twin greenhouse. We ran into him here at Queen's Park at one of the receptions, just before the winter break. I said to him, "Peter, how did the expansion go? Did you ever build that greenhouse and add those 100 employees?" He said, "Vic, I want you to know. I did, indeed, build that greenhouse. I spent \$100 million building the greenhouse and hired 100 people, except I built it in Ohio." He told us that he went to Ohio because he could not afford the energy rates here in Ontario. Then he told me of his pal who did the same thing as he did, except he opened in Pennsylvania. They both have cheap power, and a lot of that power comes from the province

of Ontario, and we pay the States and Quebec every single night to take it from us.

These are real stories from real people and real corporations who have either left Ontario, expanded out of Ontario or are not hiring people, all because we have the highest hydro rates in North America. Again, our first ask: We ask this government for a credible plan to make energy affordable, and that includes halting any further sale of the shares of Hydro One.

Our second ask: We heard the same thing as we travelled Ontario on these pre-budget consultations. We ask this government for a plan to properly manage Ontario's health care system, which shall include reversing the current and planned cuts to doctors, nurses and hospitals.

Speaker, let me give you an example. You hear about cuts to hospitals. Not doctors or nurses, for a moment—we'll get to that in a second—but hospitals. They say, "We're cutting hospital beds." I often wondered, what does that mean? What does that technically mean? What does that actually mean? My wife, Patty, and I were visiting friends of ours, Jan and Joe. One of them was in the hospital, and we were visiting. They were in a double room. They said, "Have a look in the room next door." So I slid the curtain open and looked, and it was vacant, just absolutely empty. The bed was gone. The little table was gone. The phone was gone. The TV was gone. Just the electronics that are built into the wall—that's all that was left there. You have to realize what the heck that means. So I asked one of the nurses on duty and she said, "Yes. When they say they're closing a bed, they actually take the bed, fold it up, put it downstairs and cover it in plastic." They closed 60 beds in the hospital in my city of North Bay.

When I was mayor of North Bay only a few years ago, I was there for the ribbon-cutting of this brand new multi-hundred-gajillion-dollar hospital, and now here we are and 60 beds are gone. Today there are 350 fewer employees in that hospital than there were only a couple of years ago. Just this past year, only months ago, they let 158 people go—cuts to front-line health care. This is what's happening when you cannot balance the budget, when you have these wild deficits, when you have waste, mismanagement and scandal.

People say, "Vic, where are you guys going to find the money to do all these things, then?" Well, I refer back to that. You stop the waste, you begin to manage properly with the assets that you have and the resources you have, and you don't get involved in these scandals.

You can find a billion dollars to close a gas plant, but you can't find money to keep 60 hospital beds open in a brand new hospital? You can't find money for those 350 men and women who you fired? You can't find that, but you can find \$410 million to bail out a US owner of the MaRS building across the street? Now, don't get me wrong; the MaRS people do wonderful work. I'm talking about the realtor who owns the building. We found out only through the little brown envelope that was slid under the door during the election that this government secretly

paid \$410 million to bail out a US-owned company. They can find that \$410 million without telling anybody, but you can't find money for the 100 nurses that you fired in North Bay, let alone the hundreds—everybody here on this side has a story that they'll tell you. The other side has those stories, too; they don't want to tell you about them.

This is what happens. The Auditor General warned us that this was going to happen. In 2014, in her report to us, she talked about the crowding out of services; that if you continue to spend and grow these deficits and add to the debt, which was then, of course, as now, approaching \$300 billion, you are going to—and her words were “crowd out” the very services that men and women in the province of Ontario—families, seniors and kids—all require.

Nothing. Crickets. Nothing happened over there for a full year. The Auditor General, just this December, in her latest report, almost took her 2014 report word for word and repeated that. She repeated it because nobody here on the government side, the Liberal side, did anything about it. So she said, “Ahem. I'm going to tell you the same thing again this year, and maybe now you'll do something about it.” In the meantime, this crowding out has become real. We had diabetes testing strips that were cut. We have physiotherapy for seniors gone—cut from 100 sessions a year to four. We have cataract surgeries gone—cut. These are real cuts that affect real people every single day, because as the Auditor General told us, you're crowding out the services that we need.

It has to stop. That's why we're asking, in our motion today, for a plan to properly manage the health care system. The resources are there. They're just frittering them away on waste, mismanagement and scandal.

Our third ask is that we're talking about a credible—and I have to underline it; if there was such a way to visually underline the word “credible”—plan to balance the budget and take immediate action to pay down the debt. Before I got back down here this afternoon, I was telling a friend that I'm going to be talking about this, and he said to me—and I wrote this down—“Debt is like body weight. It's the easiest thing to increase and the hardest to decrease.” He hit the nail on the head; I can attest to that. But it is no joke, right? It's so easy. Wave the magic wand, pixie dust, throw it out, we'll do that. You want that? We'll give you that. You want that? Let's have it.

But somebody has got to pay these bills, and our bills are massive. We are going to hit \$300 billion in debt—\$300 billion. We are. The province of Ontario is the largest subnational debtor in the world. That's what we're number one in.

Interjection.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: To the member from Parry Sound–Muskoka, I say, we used to be number one in mining—the number one mining jurisdiction in the world. Today, we've fallen to 23rd, but we are the number one largest subdebtor nation in the world. This is what has happened to us.

Now the government will continue to claim that they're going to balance the budget, but all we've seen is red ink. Every single year: deficit, deficit, deficit. We're going to see another deficit tomorrow. They're going to tell us, “Look, the deficit is coming down.” But we learned how that deficit was reduced. In the fall economic statement, they had to come clean. On page 99, page 100, we saw that the sale of Hydro One—that money went right into general revenue. We saw that. That's very clear. They've been outed. We now know. If you look at pages 106 and 107 of the fall economic statement, it alludes to the fact that the cap-and-trade monies—\$300 million this year, \$1.3 billion next year—are all going right into general revenue as well.

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Let me just talk very briefly about the shell game that they play, where they'll say, “No, no, no. This money is for transit and infrastructure.” Well, technically, very technically, they're correct. They're going to put that money into transit and infrastructure. However, what the fall economic statement showed us—and with their Bill 144, the finance bill that came out—is that they will now have a mechanism to take the money that was already in the infrastructure budget, take that out and put it against the deficit. So it's all buzz words. The bottom line: The \$130 billion in infrastructure was there in 2014; it was there in 2015. It never needed the sale of Hydro One to make that, except last year. It's always selling something to make up the difference. So you wonder why the people of Ontario don't believe this government anymore.

If you remember a couple of years ago, when they talked about having a “path to balance,” well, Speaker, we know there was no path to balance. Their own documents that we revealed from the gas plant scandal proved there was no path to balance; they had a multi-billion-dollar hole in their budget. The Financial Accountability Officer confirmed what was in those documents just this fall.

So I want to read, just briefly, a little bit of information that we saw from the Financial Accountability Officer. It's technical, Speaker, I'll give you that, but, when you have a debt of \$300 billion and a deficit that is spewing red ink, every year, for a decade, it's important that we acknowledge this.

The government told us that they're going to balance by 2017-18. The Financial Accountability Officer said, “Well, look, you have spending planned at 4.3% of growth. We're not going to make that, so you should reduce that number to 3%. That's a fair number to use in your growth, and if you do that, you should drop your revenue by about a billion dollars.” Well, the government listened to half of it. They did drop the number from 4.3% to 2.9%—even a little better than the Financial Accountability Officer said. So we're going to have less revenue, is what that tells us. But instead of taking the rest of the Financial accountability Officer's story—he said that if you're claiming less revenue, you should lower it by a billion. Instead, they raised it by a billion. So how can you possibly tell the world that we're not

going to have 4.3% growth, we're not going to have \$124 billion in revenue, that our growth is only going to be 2.9%; and somehow, magically, that jumps up to \$125 billion in revenue. Their math, clearly, is not good.

We'll be looking very closely at the budget tomorrow to see, how do you get less growth and more revenue? We'll be very excited to see how they come to that number, because that's voodoo math. That's the Liberal math. We know that now. We know that because the finance minister, yesterday and the day before, called our asks fantasy. He said that our pre-budget asks are a fantasy. So somehow, now, asking for affordable hydro for Steve Ciglan and his wife and kids is a fantasy. Somehow, asking to restore the cuts, the 60 beds that were closed in my hospital and many others—somehow, that's a fantasy.

These people are so out of touch with reality, with real people, with real stories—stories I've talked about in this Legislature and they all heard: families who are feeling the pain, seniors who are going hungry because their caregiver hasn't got the time in the home to give them a meal. That's a real story we heard. Somebody who fell down out of weakness on their front steps because they were released from hospital too soon—that's a real story we heard. Speaker, those are real stories from real people, and that's why we're asking for our three recommendations to be acknowledged by this government and that they take our recommendations and implement them. I thank you very much for this opportunity to speak, Speaker.

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

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I want to thank the member from Nipissing for bringing this motion before us today. It does provide MPPs with an opportunity to highlight what Ontarians have a right to expect to see in the budget tomorrow, so I'm very pleased to be able to participate in the debate.

The text of the motion that is before us today identifies three priorities that that member's party would like to see in the budget tomorrow. We on this side of the House don't quite see eye to eye with those three priorities. However, we do see a need to address several other important issues that have a very direct and immediate impact on the people whom we represent in our communities.

We also see the need to call on the government to ensure that the budget addresses the issues that were raised and the input that was provided during the pre-budget consultations that were held in January. Speaker, as we now know, over that period of weeks that the pre-budget consultation was going on, the finance ministry officials were busy with government and political staffers, working on the document that's going to arrive on our desks tomorrow. So I think there was a real missed opportunity to actually incorporate some of that input that was provided.

One of those 140 witnesses who appeared before the finance committee as it went through this sham of a

public input process was London's mayor, Matt Brown. Speaker, I want to talk a little bit about the input that London's mayor presented because, definitely for myself as the member for London West and for my colleague as the member for London-Fanshawe, we would like to see the input that the mayor gave included in the budget that's going to be presented tomorrow.

Mayor Brown spoke on behalf of Londoners; he spoke on behalf of London's business community; he spoke on behalf of London's health care and educational institutions. He really iterated strongly that Londoners have a single key priority, one key ask, that they are putting forward to the province of Ontario that they would like to see—that they need to see—in the budget tomorrow, and that is a commitment to fund public transportation in our city.

Speaker, when the mayor made this presentation, he wasn't just talking on behalf of council—although council did unanimously endorse, just in November, a proposal on how London's rapid transit initiative could be implemented in our city. He wasn't just speaking on behalf of council; he was speaking on behalf of the 13,000 Londoners who participated in public engagement sessions over the last two years on our rapid transit initiatives and he was speaking on behalf of the thousands more Londoners who provided input into London's official plan, the London Plan. That plan is built entirely around the opportunities to grow inward and upward, and that, of course, revolves around an efficient way of moving people throughout the city and it requires a new transit system.

Speaker, the mayor, in his comments to the budget committee, was also speaking on behalf of the people whom I represent in London West and the people whom the member from London-Fanshawe represents and the people who are represented by the President of the Treasury Board over in London North Centre. I want to commend the member for London-Fanshawe for the questions she asked this morning about whether Londoners could expect to see a commitment to rapid transit in the budget tomorrow because London has done the work to line up the federal partners. They've secured a willing commitment from the federal government to participate in getting this rapid transit initiative off the ground, and London has allocated \$125 million in its own budget, but it needs a firm commitment that the province will be at the table as a funding partner in this initiative.

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This morning, we heard the Minister of Transportation say that certainly the province would commit to reviewing London's proposal. We need more than a commitment to review; we need a promise that the province will step up and fund this proposal. London is Canada's eleventh-largest city and the sixth-largest city in Ontario, but it is the largest city in the entire country that does not have a rapid transit system.

The minister said that the proposal would be reviewed just like a proposal from any of the other 440 municipalities that might be submitting proposals. But this ignores

the fact that Londoners have been engaged for years in the process of developing and bringing forward the proposal that is on the minister's desk. It also ignores the fact that London's per capita ridership on our current transit system is much larger than any comparable city in the province. We have 63 riders per capita versus 23 riders in York region.

That is one of the priorities that I, as the member for London West—and, I'm sure, the member for London-Fanshawe and my entire caucus—would definitely like to see in that budget tomorrow.

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

Mrs. Laura Albanese: I am pleased to speak to this motion this afternoon. Our government has a credible plan that invests in people's talents and skills, in critical infrastructure projects, strengthens retirement security and builds a dynamic business climate. Our top priority remains growing the economy and creating jobs for Ontarians.

Given the current state of economic uncertainty, we felt it was important to let Ontario businesses know, through the 2016 budget, that we will invest in our economy and create jobs. We are also committed to creating a low-carbon economy through a cap-and-trade system, and the budget will set the stage for Ontario to be part of the 2017 carbon auction.

The Ontario economy is among the strongest for economic growth in Canada at the moment. Our 2015 Q3 results showed that Ontario's real GDP has grown by 0.9%, outpacing both the Canadian and US economies. We ranked first for direct foreign investment in North America for the second year in a row, and we were the only province in Canada to gain jobs in the month of January.

Since the recession, Ontario has created more than 600,000 jobs—608,300, to be exact—and almost all of them are full-time. Also, as reflected in our January job numbers, our unemployment rate of 6.7% is beating the national unemployment rate of 7.2%, and private sector economists are forecasting that Ontario will continue to grow.

I want to give a few examples. According to the Conference Board of Canada, just yesterday, Ontario will be one of the growth leaders in 2016. In November, BMO said that Ontario's economy is expected to be among the top performers this year. According to the CIBC's top growth indicators, Ontario has "moved to the top of the heap." This was in November. In December, RBC said, "Ontario is poised to be among the faster-growing provincial economies in 2016..." According to TD in January, "B.C. and Ontario are entering 2016 with the strongest forward momentum..." This is not something that the government is stating; this is something that private sector economists independent from the government are forecasting.

I wanted to say something about our competitiveness. Corporate income tax rates in Ontario are 13 percentage points lower than the average combined federal-state

corporate income tax in the United States. Ontario is the only subnational in North America that hosts five major auto assemblers; even Michigan doesn't have as many. We've strengthened our economic relationships through trips to China, Japan, India, New York City and Chicago.

We are implementing our plan while eliminating the deficit in a way that is fair, that supports economic growth and new jobs. We are committed to balancing the budget by 2017-18. In fact, 2014-15 marked the sixth year in a row that we reported both lower-than-projected program expenses and a lower deficit.

Our plan includes, as you know, Mr. Speaker, making historic infrastructure investments—more than \$134 billion over the next 10 years, supporting more than 110,000 jobs per year.

I want to add that as parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Finance, I have the privilege of being a member of the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs. This year, as mentioned by the member from Nipissing, we travelled to Hamilton, Windsor, Thunder Bay, Sault Ste. Marie and Ottawa. We also had two days of public hearings here in Toronto, where the Minister of Finance, the Honourable Charles Sousa, appeared to hear from committee members about what mattered most to them from the public hearings.

As a committee member, what I heard is that the people of Ontario want their government to invest in their future. They want a government that protects the vital services they rely on, that builds infrastructure and grows the economy and creates jobs.

The issues and concerns raised in consultations are reflected in the decisions our government makes. This will include the upcoming 2016 budget.

Also, as parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Finance, I participated in pre-budget hearings through the Ministry of Finance, and also in tele-town halls. This year, I travelled through York region, London, Kitchener-Waterloo.

The member from London West was mentioning just a few minutes ago that the mayor made a presentation to the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs. He also made a presentation to one of the ministry's pre-budget hearings in London. So I had the pleasure of meeting him and talking to him about his proposal, and I heard from him twice.

Including SCOFEA, in total we have conducted 20 in-person consultations in 12 cities and heard from over 700 people. This means that there was a total of nine weeks of engagement—in person, online, written and by telephone consultation.

For the second year in a row, our government also listened to Ontarians through a digital platform. We launched Budget Talks, where over 6,500 Ontarians registered as users. The feedback we received overall has been very valuable as we continue with this process, and those voices will be reflected in the budget.

Mr. Speaker, I want to conclude by saying that we are concerned about the needs of the province, the needs of Ontarians, and I hope to see that reflected in tomorrow's budget.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Prince Edward–Hastings.

Mr. Todd Smith: Just to remind those who are viewing, we are talking about an opposition day motion, put forward by our finance critic today, that's calling for the government to include three things in tomorrow's budget:

—a credible plan to make energy affordable, and stop the sale of shares in Hydro One;

—a plan to properly manage Ontario's health care system; and

—a credible plan to pay down the debt and balance the budget.

Our finance critic, Mr. Fedeli, did an outstanding job in explaining all of those things.

I am one of our energy critics, specifically with a focus on halting the sale of Hydro One shares in Ontario. It's hard for me to actually express the anger that residents of Ontario have shared with me when it comes to the sale of Hydro One.

First, I'd like to address one of the arguments that the energy minister makes all the time: that selling Hydro One won't result in higher hydro rates because we have the Ontario Energy Board. He says it all the time. The minister knows, or he ought to know, that the OEB makes its determination about rates based on cost to service and return on equity.

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He also knows, because the Auditor General told us all, that Hydro One is currently facing a \$4-million infrastructure deficit, caused by the fact that a quarter of its transmission infrastructure is at the end of its service life. Somebody's going to end up paying for all that. The OEB already granted the first of what will no doubt be many increases to Hydro One, effective February 1. It was 1.9% on top of the big increases that we saw back on January 1 to hydro bills across the province. I suspect that the minister knows this, and that's why his argument is never that rates won't go up, it's that Hydro One doesn't have the final say over its own rates—which is the answer to a question that nobody ever really asked. Then, again, those tend to be the kinds of answers that this government gives us.

This is a democracy. The best public opinion research that we have puts opposition to selling Hydro One at 75%, and many surveys that we've seen have it at over 80% of people not happy. They don't want the sale of Hydro One to continue. The members opposite are hearing the same things in their constituency offices.

Ultimately, the people get to decide how they want to be governed. When more than 75%, and in many cases over 80%, of the people are opposed to something, we're compelled as democratic representatives to represent them, to listen to them and to act here in the Legislature. When you hear people rage about how disconnected politics and government are from their real life, this is what they're talking about: It's the sell-off of Hydro One. It takes a profound level of arrogance to look at 80% of

the population and tell them, "You are wrong, and we know better than you."

Part of that anger is a belief that insiders are gaming the system, too, not dissimilar to the way that the main benefactors of the cap-and-trade we saw unveiled today will be the lawyers and the lobbyists, not the ice caps or the forests. The chief accomplishment of the sale of Hydro One to this point has been to make a lot of money for the people who already have a lot of money. That's why more than 22,000 shares are owned by just three members of the Hydro One board of directors.

We move on. The number of complaints in my office when it comes to problems with Hydro One billing hasn't gone down since the first sell-off. I would say it's actually increased, and probably most in the House would agree that they've seen an increase in complaints, too, especially with the increases in the bills that we've experienced. The level of customer service has not improved. If anything, we've seen more blackouts and higher electricity bills.

I'd like to provide a couple of instances of ridiculous overbilling in addition to a further account of one that I raised here in question period on Monday. One person in my riding, Ross, was overbilled \$4,300. After contesting the overbilling, Hydro One had to admit it made an error. They refused to provide him with a cheque to reimburse him for what he had overpaid. Instead, what they did is they opted to simply credit his account.

Another constituent was overbilled \$4,935 for his cottage. In recent years, his yearly bill had been \$400 or \$500. Now, he's getting that every month as a bill.

A small businessman in North Hastings has pretty much been through Hydro One hell. After a smart meter was installed, their reported consumption went through the roof. Hydro One was forced to admit the meter was faulty; it had used the wrong multiplier. As a result, he's been overbilled somewhere in the neighbourhood of \$49,000. That's a big hit for a small businessman.

Those are just a few incidents in my riding. There are other examples right across the province—many of them. Yet even this morning, we had the Premier doing her Marie Antoinette across the aisle here in the House, saying that the only way that we can have affordable energy in Ontario is to go back to coal or subsidize rates. How about we just end the stupidity that we've from this government over the last number of years? How about we go about restoring basic customer service?

Who's paying for this stupidity at the end of the day? It's the person who gets that hydro bill in the mail—the same 80% of the people the government is choosing to ignore. That's why I'll be supporting the motion put forward by our finance critic here this afternoon.

Mr. Tim Hudak: Point of order.

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

Mr. Tim Hudak: Speaker, I want to introduce future members of provincial Parliament, the students here for the model Parliament. I don't know if it's allowed, but perhaps the future MPPs could raise their hands and identify themselves now.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): I thank the member, but they're not supposed to do that. But welcome to the Legislature. I hope you learn a lot from these very intelligent members.

Further debate?

Ms. Catherine Fife: Welcome to the Parliament of Ontario, Queen's Park. I would like to see more women put their hands up there, please.

It is a pleasure to join the debate today. I, as the finance critic and the critic for Treasury Board, am in a unique position. This part of this debate is that I'm the critic for saving, where the government is trying to save money, which is in all the wrong places, and where they are spending money. If you follow the money, they are not doing their due diligence from a fiscally responsible—actually, just basic common-sense management perspective.

This opposition day motion actually poses a really interesting quandary for us as New Democrats. Of course, we share the concerns of the PC caucus on where the cuts are actually happening. We've also borne witness, each and every single day at question period, as we raise those issues.

My colleague the finance critic—we spent seven full days listening to Ontarians. We were on trains, planes and automobiles. We got onto that chartered plane and we travelled all over Ontario. We listened to 140 delegations in person. We received hundreds of letters and reports from the people of this great province, asking us—imploring us, actually—to hold this government to account and to rethink where they are spending money.

Yet the quandary for us is that if you follow the money—that is really the question here. If we want to support the motion as it's portrayed, around health care and around education and around basic public services, then you have to find the money. So the question is, where is the money going here in the province of Ontario? We have only to look at the last five—since I've been here as a new MPP; I've only been here for three years—Auditor General reports, which very clearly indicate to us that this government has a serious ethical issue.

Budgets should be moral documents. Budgets should speak to the priorities of the people of this province, and then they should have the appropriate allocation of resources to support those priorities. Those priorities, in a democracy, should come from the people who come to speak to us. We are only here to represent the interests of the people of this province.

When those people come to us and they say, "We have been on a wait-list for two years for a long-term-care spot," when they come to us at these committees and they say—the Fix Our Schools group came to us and they showed us pictures of the deplorable state of schools in the province of Ontario because the government has backed off their original goal of ensuring that the maintenance fees and the maintenance funding for schools have been kept up. When that happens, we are challenged on this side of the House to embrace those comments that

were said earlier in the House today around working collaboratively and collectively to support this province.

Those Auditor General reports, for us, are basically, ironically, a road map to how to get this province back on track. A natural place for me to go in this conversation would be on the issue of road maintenance, being that I just mentioned a road map. That's really funny. If you were paying attention, you would laugh.

The Auditor General raised an issue, and this is a very simple example of how poorly run—or the lack of the integrity of the due diligence of how procurement of services are followed through at this place. The Auditor General raised the issue of how road maintenance contracts are procured and how they're awarded. There used to be a time and a place in this great province where the province and the Ministry of Transportation were directly responsible for ensuring that our roads were safe, that they were built with integrity, and that private companies were not coming to the public trough and making a huge amount of money at our expense. At that time, there was some oversight, some direct accountability. There was.

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The government has chosen a different path—a different road, if you will. The Auditor General indicated that those contracts were awarded in this province without proper due diligence. For instance, companies were awarded contracts to ensure that our roads were safe and cleared of snow when those companies did not even have the equipment to do so. So what does the government do? The government goes out and buys equipment so the company can do the job it bid on in the first place. Then, when that company failed to actually fulfill its responsibility per the contract it had with the government of Ontario, the Ministry of Transportation filed a fine for that company. We just learned in January that \$49 million worth of fines were issued to these companies that were contracted to do this work. I'm not even getting into the human cost of not keeping roads safe.

This is especially important for our northern communities, where they don't have a TTC, they don't have a rapid bus. They have so few options. The car is their only way to get around. I feel like I need to bring this, because we were in Thunder Bay, and this was a real issue. It's a connectivity issue; it's a productivity issue. In order for businesses to be successful, they need these roadways. So the Ministry of Transportation issues \$49 million worth of fines and fails to collect those fines. Well, that is a broken system, Mr. Speaker.

When we look at the Auditor General's reports and follow where the money is going or, more to the point, where the money is not going, one only has to look at infrastructure. There is not a day that goes by in this House that the Premier and every minister on that side of the House don't say how important infrastructure is. We all know how important infrastructure is. We also know how important social infrastructure is. We heard about the social infrastructure piece at the committee in Hamilton. The director of the Hamilton Roundtable for

Poverty Reduction pointed out that precarious employment affects approximately 44% of the employees in the greater Toronto and Hamilton area.

You were there, Mr. Speaker. Thank you for being there with me that day.

Three quarters of everyone using a food bank are receiving their main income from the provincial government. This is not sustainable. I'm going to tell you why this exists. The provincial government is instituting hunger through its inability to fix the social assistance system, which has been broken for years. He implored this government to take action, because there are enough kids using food banks in Hamilton alone to fill 270 classrooms. We should all be ashamed of that number.

The reason this exists is directly related to the fact that we do not have a provincial strategy for affordable housing. Housing connects everything. The legal society said that they have to actually tell people that it makes more sense for them to get evicted from their poor housing situation than deal with the bureaucracy and red tape of a broken system of supportive housing. That supportive housing net is frayed; it is broken.

We heard that sometimes 60% of the students in Hamilton go from school to school. Do you know why they're not succeeding? They're hungry, and they are in a constant state of instability.

We share the belief that infrastructure matters. We do need an affordable supportive housing strategy. I know that the minister is going to come forward with this plan in the spring. I look forward to that plan, because that will underpin everything, Mr. Speaker.

But to the infrastructure piece: The Premier will stand up in this House and say that in order for us to have infrastructure, we have to sell Hydro One. They're going to broaden the ownership of Hydro One. You don't get any broader than the entire province of Ontario. We all owned Hydro One. That's as broad as you get. If you cut pieces of it off, you reduce the revenue that comes into this province, you compromise the health care system and you compromise the education system. I know there are good people on that side of the House who share our concerns.

Now we have the Financial Accountability Officer's report, which shows that after 2017-18, after this deficit is reduced off the backs of the most vulnerable people in the province of Ontario, then we'll start to see the revenue reduced from Hydro One. There is a correlation between the selling off of a public asset and the revenues that come into this place.

On infrastructure and the Auditor General—why this government is not looking more closely at how infrastructure is procured in the province of Ontario after the Auditor General released her report where she said that of the last 75 semi-privatized projects since the early 2000s, this government spent \$8 billion more than they needed to—

Hon. Steven Del Duca: She got it wrong.

Ms. Catherine Fife: Oh, she got it wrong. The Auditor General is wrong.

Hon. Steven Del Duca: Yes, on this one she is wrong.

Ms. Catherine Fife: She did a forensic audit of Infrastructure Ontario, who could not even defend themselves. They came to committee and they had no answers for us.

You have Ed Clark, who is in charge. He's working in a little office outside of the Premier's office. There's a little green curtain, and there are some levers in there, and he's there. Then you—

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): I would ask the Minister of Transportation to cut back a little bit on his comments. The cross-dialogue is not acceptable. It goes through the Chair. Thank you.

Continue.

Ms. Catherine Fife: Thank you very much.

Then you have Bert Clark, his son, who is in charge of Infrastructure Ontario, who came to our committee and could not, with any veracity, challenge the Auditor General.

I'm telling you, for us, this is the missing piece of the PC motion: In order to ensure that we have that funding for health care, for education and for those social programs, we need transformative change in the way that the finances of the finance ministry are allocated. We need the Treasury Board to do their due diligence in ensuring that those contracts—we need to set the bar high for those contracts, because if you set that bar high enough, those contracts wouldn't go out to the private sector, because the private sector is interested in making money. They are not interested in delivering the services. That's what we found with the road maintenance contracts. Every time those trucks go out to do the job that they were hired to do, they lose money. So there is a direct correlation to the way this government has embraced privatization of public services. It is more costly, based on the Auditor General's report—not on our reports, not on our internal investigation. The Auditor General of this province is an independent officer of the Legislature. She is non-partisan. She came forward with this report. You need the money. You should be looking for money any place that you can find it. It's independent intelligence outside of this place which is predominant.

When the Auditor General sharply criticized Infrastructure Ontario, specifically Ontario's use of public-private partnerships for infrastructure, it was a key finding. In the last nine years, Ontarians have spent \$8 billion more on IO's AFP model than if conventional public financing had been used.

Why would a government that can borrow money at 2.9% borrow it at anywhere between 9% and 28%? Why? For the love of humanity, somebody on that side of the House has to ask the question. There has to be a way.

The Premier says, "I have to sell Hydro One. We have to have Infrastructure Ontario and borrow money to the tune of \$5.7 billion," according to the Auditor General's report, but yet there's a conflict here. It is a contradiction. There's a walking contradiction, and it's on that side of the House, Mr. Speaker.

When you look at the public accounts—because this is the key part about this place. You can have the ribbon

cuttings and you can have the press releases and you can put out the media releases and you can say whatever you want. But if you follow the money in this place, and if you look at public accounts, this is really interesting. Based on the last public accounts annual report, you will notice that 10 years ago the government tended to overspend its budget on infrastructure: a \$4-billion overage in 2007-08, presumably due to the sudden need for stimulus. They're still talking about that recession. They're going to spin us so far that we're going to end up in another recession if we're not careful.

1700

But that pattern has reversed under this Premier. Now the government routinely—

Interjection.

Ms. Catherine Fife: Listen to this. I know you're fascinated by it.

Now the government routinely underspends its infrastructure budget by billions. I wish the minister was here.

In both 2013-14 and 2014-15, the government cites lower-than-forecasted construction activity. You seem unable to spend the infrastructure dollars that were already available, despite saying to us in great desperation that you must sell Hydro One for infrastructure instead of taking this mandate to the people of this province. You're not even spending the money that you already allocated in your budget. What's happening here? It poses a real question, Mr. Speaker.

We went across the province. We had some really creative feedback from people: from students, from administrators in public organizations, from the private sector. Invest Ottawa came forward with an idea that said, "Pull some of that private sector money in for venture capital. Give them a tax credit and pull some of the private sector money in." That's a brilliant idea.

Government cannot do everything—I almost said "anything" because that's really what I'm feeling. Government cannot do everything, but government has a key role. Government has a key role in creating the confidence for investment. What we have here in the province of Ontario is an incredible crisis of confidence.

It's the way you distribute the funding. The Auditor General found that 80% of the money from the South-western Ontario Development Fund, from the RED fund and from the other pots of money was done behind closed doors. That's a real problem.

You know what that says to a young company that's thinking about coming into Ontario? It says that if they're not in the Liberals' pockets, they're not going to get the money. That is a crisis of confidence: 80% of the money—

Hon. James J. Bradley: Oh, that's not fair.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member will withdraw that.

Ms. Catherine Fife: I withdraw.

The Auditor General found that 80% of those funds were distributed to two companies without a public process. That does not instill confidence for the people of this province.

We look forward to this budget. We're going to have some fun with this budget tomorrow, but I tell you one thing: What you've done by introducing this budget in the manner that you have is that you've only added to the cynicism of this democracy in this province, ignoring those voices—we are still writing the report. The finance critic from the PC Party and myself are part of the committee that is still writing the report. It has never happened in the history of this province that a finance report has not been delivered to the finance minister before he or she delivers the budget. It has never happened.

What that tells us and what that tells the people of this province is that you have truly just thrown up your hands and said, "We are just going to do whatever we want and we don't care what the people of this province think. We don't care what they've said, and we're going to do what we want, what Liberals want." But that is not in the best interest of the people of this province.

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

Mr. Yvan Baker: It's a pleasure to join the debate.

You know, it was wonderful. Just about an hour or two ago, I had a chance to meet with all the wonderful young people who are here today as part of the youth Parliament. They asked a series of wonderful questions.

As I stand here and think about what we've heard here today and the meetings that I've had with them, it reminds me why I'm here. I'm here to improve the quality of life for the people in my community, the people of Ontario and, really, to think about making the kinds of investments, making the kinds of decisions that are going to serve these people well in generations to come.

This government has credible plans to do those things, has a credible plan to manage our money wisely and has a credible plan to balance the budget. What's incredible to me is this motion and the lack of credibility in the arguments put forward by the opposition.

When this government came to office in 2003, we had blackouts, which were left to us by the Conservative government. We were left with unsustainable funding of hydro rates by the taxpayer. Now, the PC Party is promising that they have a plan, yet they have no plan. They haven't come forward with a plan.

Our government has a plan, and it's a credible plan. There's a range of things being done. I don't have time in my two minutes to speak to them all, but a tremendous number of steps have been taken to keep rates low; a tremendous number of steps are being taken to make sure Hydro One is operating more efficiently and in the interests of the people of Ontario. The kinds of steps that this government is taking—we're doing everything and we're doing it credibly to keep rates low, and we'll continue to do that.

The folks across keep talking about health care and cuts. The reality is that this government has been more committed than any government across the aisle to investing in health care. We continue to invest in health care and we continue to invest in hospitals, in doctors, in nurses, in personal support workers, in community care.

The member from Nipissing's party, when they were in office—they have no credibility when it comes to this issue. They closed 28 hospitals. They fired 4,000 nurses. They are the party that campaigned on—wait for it—firing 100,000 public sector workers, of which many thousands would have been in communities across the province delivering the health care that we are here investing in and delivering on. We have a plan; the folks across did not have a plan.

Lastly, I came to office after serving in the private sector. I have the fortune of working with Minister Deb Matthews and members of the Treasury Board to help ensure that we're getting value for taxpayers' dollars and that we balance the budget by 2017-18. We're not doing it like governments of the past have done it, like the PC Harris government did, like the PC caucus campaigned on doing by firing 100,000 people. We're doing it in a responsible way.

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Are we finished yelling? Good. If somebody wants to yell, they might want to get in their seat. Then I can identify them properly.

Continue.

Mr. Yvan Baker: Thank you, Speaker.

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: The truth hurts.

Mr. Yvan Baker: The truth hurts, exactly.

We've committed to balancing the budget. We have a credible plan to do so. We're doing it in a responsible way. Under the leadership of the President of the Treasury Board and the team at Treasury Board, this entire caucus and cabinet are working to go program by program, line by line through the budget to deliver better outcomes, better value for money, better bang for the buck and, in so doing, making sure we're delivering better outcomes in health care, in energy, in education across government, but also working towards a balanced budget.

The member opposite talks a lot about credibility in his motion. He often refers to the FAO. Let me quote from the FAO's report—this one, which the member keeps referring to. It says here, "The province would appear to be on track to beat its 2015-16 deficit target of \$8.5 billion." That's credibility. The arguments from across are not credible.

Speaker, this is a government that has a plan on health care, is investing in health care. This is a government that has a plan on hydro and is working hard to keep rates down. Is there more work to do? You bet there's a lot of work to do, but we've got a credible plan. This is a government that's responsibly working to make sure we deliver value for taxpayers' dollars. We're going to deliver a balanced budget in 2017-18.

This is the plan that the people of Ontario deserve, the people of Etobicoke Centre deserve and the young people in this gallery deserve.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate? The member from Kitchener-Conestoga.

Mr. Jeff Yurek: Elgin-Middlesex-London.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Elgin-Middlesex-London. Sorry.

Mr. Jeff Yurek: Thank you very much, Speaker. I know the two of us look alike from a distance, and we sit so far from each other.

I'm just going to speak for a few minutes and discuss a little bit our second ask, which is to properly manage Ontario's health care system.

It's interesting to note that the members on the government side keep referencing governments and how they managed certain sectors. But I think the people of Ontario today are sick of the deflection dealing with the past. They would like them to take responsibility for what's occurring currently. I'll just tell you what happened in the last year alone with regard to health care in our province.

1710

First of all, the government started off by cutting \$54 million from the health care budget, even though the federal transfer went up 6% last year. This government cut \$815 million from doctor services without even negotiating with the doctors. They walked away from the table and then cut \$815 million. This government cut 50 residency positions for our doctors in this province. I can tell you, coming from rural Ontario—and I know the northern members here—we don't have enough doctors to fill the spaces that are needed. And what do they do? They cut the residency positions.

Mr. Speaker, there was an interesting survey taking place when the government cut doctor services—\$815 million. Prior to that announcement, they surveyed the residents in the school systems and the students: "Are you planning to set up shop in Ontario after you graduate and get your medical licence?" Eighty-nine per cent said, "Yes, no problem." After this government cut \$815 million from doctor services, the results are that 30% are going to stay in Ontario.

We've seen this shortage before, precipitated by mistakes made by previous governments. We're still paying for it today. We're starting to see enough doctors in the system, but this government has taken a backwards stance. We've also seen this past year—the fourth consecutive year—hospital budgets have been frozen, which is resulting in numerous nursing positions, over 300 in Nipissing alone, being cut from the system.

You ask, "Why? Why are they doing these cuts?" It's not because the money isn't there; it's the mismanagement of the money. The Auditor General reported herself that 40% of the dollars that go into the CCAC sticks with administration and doesn't go to front-line health care. It doesn't go to the home care system. So this government is paying for and creating more bureaucracy, cutting front-line health care professionals and freezing hospital budgets, resulting in cuts to the nursing profession. All we're asking is to have some sort of management plan for our health care sector in the budget tomorrow.

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

Mr. Wayne Gates: As I rise today to discuss the priorities of the 2016 budget, there are some realities that

exist in my riding in Niagara and across the province that need to be recognized by this government.

The first thing everyone needs to know is that, for most people in this province, life is getting harder. It's getting harder for families, it's getting harder for seniors, and, quite frankly, it's getting harder for young people in the province of Ontario. Their hydro rates are climbing. They can't get decent medical care; it's becoming harder to find. For years now, people have begged this government to help them find jobs.

I met with the people of the Niagara Falls riding. They're good people. They work hard. I don't think they should need to ask for these things. I believe they're entitled—they're entitled—to decent medical care, affordable hydro and good-paying jobs. The people of Niagara Falls, Fort Erie and Niagara-on-the-Lake know they're not the only ones struggling to get by.

It breaks my heart when I talk to seniors in my riding about the challenges they're facing today, after dedicating their entire lives to the riding and to building this province and this country. Increased hydro rates on fixed income—you know what that would be like? They've got to make a decision whether they can even afford to stay in their own homes after they've worked their entire lives. They can't get doctors and nurses. They can't see their doctors on a regular basis. And what's interesting about that is, as a province, we're fighting with our doctors, yet we have no problem giving CEOs for hydro \$435 million. It makes no sense to me.

The cost of food is rising. Some of that is because of the dollar. Do you know what that does for seniors? It means more seniors have to go to food banks. The cost of medication is increasing. Seniors are being forced to choose between food and medicine. Affordable housing—I have no doubt that my fellow members in this House are hearing the same concerns. They have all heard from the constituents in their own ridings about the problems they face. Knowing that fact only makes it more disappointing that the Liberal government refuses to listen to the people of the province of Ontario.

Of course, we're told that they had consultations across the province. We are told that hundreds of witnesses appeared before them, and that their advice was taken seriously. Mr. Speaker, I worry that this may not be the case. Let me read to you from the Toronto Star, of all places:

"This time, with the budget being released far earlier than in previous years, the Liberal government's pretence of consultation looks...."

"Factor in the reality ... that key decisions are made well in advance, and it becomes clear the budget was locked up weeks ago—at the precise time the government claimed to be taking the public" seriously.

The people of my community and the province came out to the consultations because they wanted to make a difference. They wanted the results—so that their voices would be heard clearly in the process. "Do we want to stop the sell-off of Hydro One," they were asked. "Do we want to have action being taken to make sure life is more

affordable for seniors, and that our kids have post-secondary educations they can afford, so that they don't come out with a mortgage when they're done?"

Mr. Speaker, I worry that this budget will show that the concerns of the people of the province of Ontario are not being heard. While we sit here and debate the upcoming budget, it is equally unclear what kinds of cuts the official opposition has in mind to balance the budget.

The Ontario NDP knows that the people of Ontario cannot afford another round of Harper/Harris-style cuts simply to make the accountants happy. The people of the province face long-term challenges that require bold solutions—solutions that do not include the cancellation of major infrastructure projects or reckless, no-strings-attached corporate tax cuts. They need a plan that makes life easier for everyday Ontarians, not the richest of the rich.

Look at the people of Niagara-on-the-Lake and Fort Erie, who have all but lost access to their medical care. They can't afford any more health care cuts from either the Liberal government or the official opposition. They believe that as Canadians and residents of this province, they have a right to decent health care. I agree with them, and I think we all should.

This government, of course, will claim that they are increasing spending on health care, but we all know different. We've seen the Liberal government putting more and more money in the hands of private health care. I'm going to give you an example—it was touched on by the Conservatives: a company like CarePartners. The Liberal government gives LHINs the money, they then give it to the CCAC, and they then give it to CarePartners. And do you know what happens? It doesn't get to the front-line workers. That's the problem. That's why you've got to stop the privatization of health care. You're spending more and more money on CEO salaries and not putting money back into front-line health care where it belongs.

How can we claim to be spending more when 1,200 nurses have lost their jobs under the Liberals? Ontario—

Interjections.

Mr. Wayne Gates: This is important. I know you're all talking, but I'd like you to listen to this.

Ontario has 2.3 hospital beds per 1,000 people. That's what we have today, compared to the national average, which is 3.5 per 1,000.

Go ask the people of Fort Erie if this Liberal government has increased front-line health care services. I don't think you'll like the answer. It's downright shameful.

Mr. Speaker, I also want to take a moment to look at the official opposition's record on privatization and Hydro. These days, they talk a good game about the sale of Hydro One and wanting to keep our utilities public. They seem to like the message of the NDP; they're starting to run on it too. But yet again, the record is a little different from what is being said. This is important. We are the only party that has been fully and vocally opposed to the sale of Hydro, in whole or in part—

Ms. Laurie Scott: That's not true.

1720

Mr. Wayne Gates: Absolutely it's true—of our public assets from day one. We don't want to sell 60%; we don't want to sell 49%; we don't want to sell 1% of Hydro. The Ontario NDP is the only party that has travelled right across the province hosting town hall meetings, including in my riding of Niagara Falls, to make sure the people of Ontario, in all parts of Ontario, have their voices heard on this incredibly important issue.

Think about this: Now nearly 200 municipalities—of which I was one; I was a city councillor—including all three in my riding, have said no to the sale of Hydro. What's interesting, when I hear about how the Liberal government likes to listen to the province of Ontario and the people in this great province, is that 85%—it's a lot higher than my math mark was in high school—of the residents of this province agree not to sell Hydro.

The people of this province understand that it doesn't make sense to sell, in whole or in part, a company that brings in \$700 million per year in profit. They understand that by losing that profit, we lose money for education, we lose money for hospitals and we lose money for infrastructure. And not just once: year after year after year. These reckless plans of cuts and privatization do not serve the best interests of the people in my riding or in the province.

Let me tell you a little bit about my priorities. I don't have a lot of time so I'm going to skip. In fact, I've got a project just like that in my riding that is waiting and waiting for the Liberal government: to expand the GO train all the way to Niagara Falls. The entire region has come together and given a solid business plan to the province which shows that bringing the GO train to Niagara Falls would bring—listen to this, because I know my good friend Mr. Bradley will like to hear this—\$195 million in economic benefit, 2,400 permanent jobs, 1,200 full time construction jobs, and remove thousands of cars off the QE each day.

Mr. Speaker, people in the province don't want cuts and they don't want to see our assets privatized to help the richest of the rich. They want jobs, decent health care and the bills they can afford. Take a look at the people in Fort Erie. I only have a few seconds left. On their hydro bills, their grocery bills—they even lost their hospital. What we need is those slots returned to Fort Erie to put jobs in our community.

Thank you very much. I appreciate the time.

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

Mr. Granville Anderson: Point of order, Mr. Speaker: I would like to welcome Tenzin Shomar and Megan Chassels from Durham. They're here for the model Parliament.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): We'll allow that. It's not really a point of order, but we'll allow that.

Further debate.

Hon. James J. Bradley: I'd like to approach this resolution, or opposition resolution, as we put it, with a little different approach because I recognize that when

you're in opposition, your job is to be negative about whatever the government is doing. I hope I wasn't that way when I was in opposition. The member for West Lincoln would know I was very positive about anything the government did that was good on this side. I just couldn't think of anything when the time came up.

I'm going to make this prediction: When we're all phoned by our local radio station or newspapers, we will say good things about the budget and the opposition will say negative things. That's my prediction.

Interjections.

Hon. James J. Bradley: I know that's hard to predict, except I want to say one—I want to compliment the member from Niagara Falls in this regard.

On my local radio station, last budget, the round table was busy dumping on the Ontario government, as they do, talking about how there's nothing in the budget for Niagara. Here's an opposition member, who is going to find some things in the budget he disagrees with, who had to remind them—because none of them seemed to know this at the round table—that in fact \$10 million was going to the Goodman School of Business at Brock University. I want to commend the member for that. Not many people would do that, would try to correct that. Even though he had other legitimate criticisms of the budget, I want to give him credit for that that day. It really took an opposition member to do that.

The approach we're taking, what we've heard—and you see it in question period. This reminds me of the old Canadian Tire commercial, where they said they wanted to spend like Santa and save like Scrooge. Well, the first half of question period—today it was only the first few questions—was about saving. The Conservative members get up in the Legislature and say, "You've got to address the budget; you've got to cut spending; you have to get your spending under control." And then, of course, they get into other questions where they want to spend money—a total inconsistency taking place.

Now, back in the days when the member for West Lincoln, the member who represents Glanbrook and Niagara West, was leader, there was consistency. I knew where he stood. I may not have agreed with the policies he brought forward, but he was very principled in his approach and he was very consistent in his approach. Now, if I want to be flippant, I would say consistently wrong, but I won't say that, because he actually believed it, and his party believed, in those days. So you knew where he stood.

Let me tell you another thing he did—two things I thought were rather courageous and consistent. We had a budget, a couple of budgets ago, where he was calling for some significant cuts in government spending, as the party wanted. They asked him, "What about West Lincoln hospital in your riding?" Instead of saying, "Well, you've got to accept that," he was consistent and said, "No, I have to be consistent and I accept that." He's a good supporter of West Lincoln Memorial Hospital. Subsequent to that, in a future budget, he went to bat for it. But that was an example of consistency.

The other thing was, during the election campaign, his party, despite a lot of pressure in the Niagara region, said no to GO Transit to Niagara until the budget was balanced. That was their position, and my friend from Niagara Falls will remind me that Bart Maves, the former member and the Conservative candidate, said that in the all-candidates meeting, that there would be no GO Transit to Niagara at that time. That's hard to say, because, again, a lot of people were clamouring for it at that time.

Today, the present leader, I think the last person he meets with is the person he agrees with, because he agrees with everybody now. Even what they use to refer to as the "union bosses"—he's now courting those people who his party used to, and certainly his Prime Minister used to, refer to as "union bosses."

I was pleased today that the member for Nepean got a question. I want to say that. She had been shut out. The questions are good; they grate me sometimes, but I like to see her have a question. Somebody finally let her on the list.

Look, it's very difficult. I meet with people from various agencies—by the way, I want to say another thing. I was sitting with the member for Niagara West–Glanbrook at another meeting—I won't get into the details because it was confidential—with a local stakeholder group. The thing he could have said—I'm sitting there as a government member—he could have dumped all over the government and said, "I disagree with whatever they wanted." Instead, he asked significant questions at the time. He wasn't negative towards them, but he asked significant questions. That doesn't happen that often, and, again, I admired the stance he had taken.

I'm not doing this to be mischievous—part of it is, of course. I'm not doing it to be mischievous; I'm doing it because I admired the consistency. Now, the member for Niagara West–Glanbrook would say, "Where were you when I needed you expressing these views?" As Premier Davis says from time to time, "Where were those views?"

By the way, mentioning Premier Davis, under his government, my recollection is that there was never a balanced budget under that Progressive Conservative government for 15 years—no balanced budgets. Back when I was elected, we were the small-c conservatives, asking, "When are you going to balance that budget?" Now, things have changed. It depends on where you sit in the House.

On hydro, the member from Niagara Falls is right: The only thing these people dispute over there, despite what they're saying—they think we should sell all of hydro, secretly, in their heart of hearts. They think we should sell all of hydro, and the government simply wants, as the member for Kitchener–Waterloo said, to broaden the ownership. She understood that.

1730

I'm just looking for some consistency. They closed 28 hospitals when they were in power. That's what they did because they wanted to make a transformation within the

health care system, and there were a number of nurses who lost their jobs and so on.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): It was so quiet in here a few minutes ago, and now it has escalated, to say the least. There seem to be people who aren't in their seats who are talking. So maybe we'll cut that back and we'll sit in our seats, and the minister will continue with his expert cross-examination.

Hon. James J. Bradley: Thank you very much.

When I meet with stakeholders, I ask them this question because they put forward a good case for more expenditures in their area. I ask at the end of the meeting—I never get the answer I want to hear, but I ask at the end of the meeting, "If we are to do everything you would like, are you prepared to campaign for a tax increase?" "Oh, no, no. Go and take it from education, take it from health care, take it from a thousand other places." Because when you make those promises, when you talk about wanting to enhance services to a great extent, it costs money. Either you run a deficit, and you're critical of that; you raise taxes, and you'll be critical of that; or you don't do it, and you're critical of that. That is the job of the opposition: to be critical.

I want to save some time for my other members. I can just see the dirty looks coming at me now for taking as long as I did.

But the last thing I want to say is this—with your permission, using a prop. It says this. It says, "Bats all folks." It is reputed that one baseball player would like to get paid \$30 million a year. I just want to put this to the House: That would be twice as much as all members of the Ontario Legislature put together, reminding, as you want me to, that we're in a seven-year pay freeze at this time. I just wanted to put that on the record before I yielded the floor to my good friends on the other side.

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

Mr. Lorne Coe: Members will know that I spent a better part of January and half of February involved with a successful campaign.

Interjection: Yes, he did.

Mr. Lorne Coe: Thank you. But it was met with three basic themes at the doors. Some of you would have heard that. I know you were campaigning in Whitby–Oshawa. The hydro system is out of touch with the reality of homeowners and businesses; there's an underfunded health care system that now lacks the basic support to provide first-class health care treatment to residents; and a budget imbalance that makes our province one of the highest subnational debtors in North America.

Now, since arriving at Queen's Park, I continue to hear the same concerns from constituents in Whitby–Oshawa. What they're telling me is that families are hurting and are asking for help, and it's not limited to my riding alone. This is such a consistent and universal call to action. Whether it be Sault Ste. Marie, Leeds–Grenville and points in between, families are looking for help, but the Liberal government's not listening, are they? They're not listening.

Mr. Speaker, unlike the Liberals, our party has listened to the voters of Ontario across the width and breadth of the province. The message we're receiving is very clear, some of which we've heard here in the chamber thus far. Significant change must come now or our province will continue to drift aimlessly over a financial course of ruin.

We need affordable and sustainable energy in this province. That's a simple fact. Hydro in Ontario is one of the most expensive on this continent. Many of my constituents receive their hydro bills, open them cautiously and then creatively calculate a way to pay them and still be in a position to feed their families. That's across all sectors of the Whitby–Oshawa riding. It has become a migraine pain without medical relief.

What's clear is that there's no sound Liberal strategy to lower rates to help Ontarians.

As well, as we go forward, the budget must have a plan to manage Ontario's health care. There are growing health care deficiencies in Ontario, and the system needs real attention.

Earlier this week, I referenced the layoffs at Ontario Shores Centre for Mental Health Sciences, but this is merely the tip of the proverbial iceberg, in Whitby, Oshawa and elsewhere in the province. We cannot afford to have Ontarians scrambling for health care at an especially vulnerable time in their lives. Liberal mismanagement has left the delivery of health care in a very precarious state in our province.

The voters in Whitby–Oshawa were very clear on election night, weren't they?

Mr. Todd Smith: They certainly were.

Mr. Lorne Coe: Very clear. They demanded real change, and I intend to continue advocating on their behalf until we have a health care system in place that not only meets their expectations but exceeds them.

Finally, we need a plan to balance our budget and to reduce our provincial debt. Without a sound fiscal plan, this government will continue to cut funding to doctors, shut our schools, and continue a pattern of reckless behaviour that includes the share sale of Hydro One.

We speak about returning this province to a place of economic dominance, but it will not happen unless it becomes a place where businesses want to invest and people want to raise their families. We must look to the financial health of Ontario. We must focus on the sound fiscal management of this province and not wait for the imaginary notion that improved provincial monetary health will let us deal with the debt.

I believe that the choices that we make now are at the centre of Ontario's future success and Ontario's resurgence as an economic powerhouse in Canada.

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

Mr. John Fraser: I do want to say at the outset that if you saw a look of disappointment on me a little while ago, it was only because I realized I was going to be unable to use the lines that I had stolen from the minister without portfolio, and that he would be a very hard act to

follow. But I respect where I am in the order of precedence.

I'd like to welcome the member from Whitby–Oshawa and address one of the things he said a little earlier on. I had the opportunity, I would like to say, to be in a radio interview with the member from Nipissing, and we agreed on some things and we disagreed on some things. When I look at this motion, there's something that we actually agree on, but I'll get to that in a little while.

We all know that government is about choices. If we want to go back to choices, we'll want to take a look at some choices that were made. In 2009, this government had a choice. We had a financial crisis. We had the auto industry with 400,000 related jobs, families. They needed support. This government, and the federal government as well, made a choice to invest in that auto industry. You'll hear, as you heard from the member from—well, you heard, earlier on, one of my colleagues say, "We're the only subnational with five major auto makers," and that's where we are right now. We made that choice. On the other side, the choice was made to say, "We're not going to support that." I don't think it was the right choice, but I respect that choice. It's all about choices.

Hydro: Unlocking the equity in hydro is a choice. I can understand the members directly opposite from me, because they've been very clear about where they stood from the beginning. I may not agree with them, but I respect their choice.

I know that the members of the other side now have the same position, but not too long ago you had a stronger position than we had. To what the minister without portfolio was saying, it's like, "Okay, we've got some vacillating going on here. Is it going to go this way and then back this way?" It's about a choice. You can't choose everything, and as the minister without portfolio said, you can't say, "Pay down the debt, and you know that new hospital in my riding, and, oh, by the way, we have the highest-paid doctors in Canada and we want you to give them more money, but at the same time, do this." That's not a choice. Sometimes over here we have discussions, to say, "If they can only bring that money tree in the west lobby over here to the east lobby, everything would be great." Respect choices, right?

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Governments of different stripes have all made choices and decisions—I said this last week—about how we were going to make health care sustainable. We've all made difficult choices that have affected people, practitioners, patient care—I could list them right now. We all know that.

One of the things that is a little hard to take is when there's motive ascribed to those changes that we have to make. Now, we're all trying to make this system sustainable and we're working with a finite pool of money. We all know that. You know that, we know that.

Mr. Randy Hillier: So don't waste any of it.

Mr. John Fraser: What I'm saying is, don't spend your time saying, "There isn't a finite pool of money. Do all these things that we want you to do." It does not work

that way. It doesn't work that way, and I know how opposition works. I was on the other side. I respect that you're advocating for communities, and you need to do that, but you can't have it both ways. As the Minister without portfolio said, he respects the choices made by the member from Niagara–Glanbrook because he spoke—

Mr. Randy Hillier: You were never on this side.

Mr. Shafiq Qaadri: You were never in opposition.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): It appears that you've got people on your side, while you are talking, yelling and yelling at you that you weren't on that side. Okay. I heard that. And then I've got people over here cross-dialoguing with the speaker: the member from Lanark. I would suggest that we cut it back a bit. It's bad enough on opposition day, but when even the government starts talking loudly when their own speaker is talking, that's embarrassing. So can we please cut it back? Thank you.

Mr. John Fraser: I'll turn down the volume a little bit and get a little less exercised.

I wanted to say that I think that the choices that are presented in this motion are false. They're false choices. You know they're false choices, I know they're false choices. You know it's all politics. But I do agree on one thing. Here's the one thing I agree with the member from Nipissing on, and this is what it is: There is a credible plan to balance the budget. We've had one. There will be one tomorrow.

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

Hon. Steven Del Duca: As I am fond of saying, it's always a pleasure—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Stop the clock. I can't even hear him.

Hon. Steven Del Duca: I'll talk louder.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): No, no, you were good.

I can't even hear him. That's amazing. It's your guy, and over here, it's fairly loud too, and you haven't even voted yet. Please cut it back. I'd like to hear what the Minister of Transportation has to say. Thank you.

Hon. Steven Del Duca: Thanks very much, Speaker. I suspect it's going to sound eerily familiar to many in this House, because this is my first opportunity to be here in 2016, to have the chance to add my voice to this debate.

I would have thought, Speaker, given that we were away from this Legislature, in each of our ridings, over the later part of last year and the earlier part of this year, that that would have presented the member from Nipissing and the leader of the official opposition and, frankly, even members of the third party with the opportunity to hear very directly from their constituents about the importance of making sure that we do continue to build the province up, that we do continue to move the province forward.

When I look at the particular opposition day motion that we're discussing or debating here this afternoon, in a

couple of occasions I can see here, it talks about the importance of a credible plan. The member from Ottawa South just referenced the fact that this government, this Premier, very clearly has a credible plan for doing exactly that—moving the province forward and building it up.

What I find remarkable is that it almost seems like we're in some sort of repeat mode here in 2016, which is a little bit disappointing, given that over the last three years, in my time here in this Legislature as an MPP from Vaughan, it's disappointing to understand that members of the official opposition—

Mr. Randy Hillier: It is disappointing. Your time here has been disappointing.

Hon. Steven Del Duca: Like the member who is speaking right now from Lanark—I forget the—

Mr. Randy Hillier: Oh, come on. It's not that hard.

Hon. Dipika Damerla: Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington.

Hon. Steven Del Duca: —Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington, who's speaking out right now. I agree with that member, surprisingly. It is disappointing. It's disappointing in his case that over the last couple of months he hasn't been able to convince his colleagues that the right thing to do for the people he represents is to invest in infrastructure, invest in health care and build the province up, which is exactly the credible plan that this Premier, this government and this finance minister are moving forward with.

The one thing that we hear over and over again—the Premier alluded to this in question period earlier today—

Interjections.

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

Hon. Steven Del Duca: The leader of the official opposition, the member from Nipissing, members of that entire caucus, on the one hand, will spend a great deal of time and energy talking about their suggestions for how we might want to slash and burn core public services, which they did when they were last in power. Let me assure you that the people of Vaughan and the people in 447 communities across this province have not forgotten the shameful record of that government, that party, when they were last in power.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: Downloaded.

Hon. Steven Del Duca: When you think of how much they downloaded to our communities, when you think of how many infrastructure transit projects they not only didn't build, but that they killed, when you think of how they filled in subways that were under construction in the city of Toronto, in the greater Toronto and Hamilton area, when you think of how our public education system and our public health care system were in chaos when they were last in power, and when you also—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Stop the clock. You got the big guy to naming, almost. I've been more than tolerant, more than reasonable. For the next person who speaks out, it's going to be the final warning,

and you certainly don't want to miss the vote. So, silenzio.

Continue.

Hon. Steven Del Duca: Speaker, your Italian sounds better than mine. I appreciate that intervention.

I look back at the motion and I see “a plan to properly manage Ontario's health care system.” Again, in that very dark period when the official opposition, the Conservative opposition, was in power, hospitals closed.

With a degree of audacity, there's even a reference to the notion of hiring more nurses here in this opposition day motion. I believe nurses were once referenced by the former Conservative Premier—they were compared to hula hoops. That goes right to the heart of exactly what we're dealing with here. It's a Conservative opposition that is so desperate to run away from its unfortunate and discouraging history as a government in this province that they will do anything.

The good news for all of us, Speaker, is that the people of Nipissing, the people of Simcoe and the people of Ontario will not be fooled again. Whether we're talking about the sale of the 407, we're talking about the under-investments in critical infrastructure right across this province, or the under-investing, the slashing and burning and the chaos left in our public education and health care systems, the people of Ontario won't be fooled.

Speaker, there's also a reference in here to “a credible plan to balance the budget.” I'm blessed with a good memory and I can still remember the front page of a major Toronto daily shortly after the Liberal government came back to power in 2003. Excuse me: They outright misrepresented the truth, Speaker, a \$6-billion—

Interjections.

Hon. Steven Del Duca: I withdraw.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): No, you'll sit down first, then you'll stand up and withdraw.

Hon. Steven Del Duca: I withdraw.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Sit down again.

Continue.

Hon. Steven Del Duca: Thank you very much, Speaker. Suffice it to say, though I was happy to withdraw that comment, the Conservative Party, the Conservative government, when last in power, left the people of Ontario with a \$6-billion deficit that they never talked about.

When I look up and down this motion, it's unfortunate that even though we are here in 2016, even though everyone on this side of the House, and people right across this province, I would think, would want to believe that this is a Conservative opposition that has learned its lesson, that is looking forward to partnering with us to move the province and move it forward—it's unfortunate that it's the same old same old from that opposition, Speaker.

Most importantly, what's most shocking to me as an MPP representing a fast-growing community in York region like Vaughan and as Ontario's Minister of Transportation is that time and time again, whether it's the leader of the official opposition or it's the leader of

the Ontario NDP, when asked repeatedly to put a plan forward for how they would build up this province, for how they would build infrastructure, for how they would four-lane highways in northern Ontario or turn GO into regional express rail or build more crucial infrastructure for a stronger economy and for a stronger quality of life—time and again, the leaders of both opposition parties refused to tell us they have a plan.

Speaker, because they have no plan, it begs the question: From the member from Nipissing who sponsored this motion, from the leader of the Conservative opposition and, frankly, from the leader of the NDP, I just want to hear once and for all, what would they cancel? Would it be GO expansion? Would it be highway construction? Would it be more hospitals? Would it be a better economy? Would it be a better quality of life? Own up to it. Tell us why you won't work with us to build this province up.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Okay, my turn.

Mr. Fedeli has moved opposition day number 1. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I heard a no.

All those in favour, please say “aye.”

All those opposed, say “nay.”

I believe the nays have it.

Call in the members. This will be a 10-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1752 to 1802.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The members take their seats, please. Order, please.

Mr. Fedeli has moved opposition day motion number 1.

All those in favour of the motion will please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Arnott, Ted	Hudak, Tim	Scott, Laurie
Bailey, Robert	Jones, Sylvia	Smith, Todd
Barrett, Toby	MacLaren, Jack	Thompson, Lisa M.
Clark, Steve	MacLeod, Lisa	Walker, Bill
Coe, Lorne	McDonell, Jim	Wilson, Jim
Fedeli, Victor	Miller, Norm	Yakabuski, John
Hardeman, Ernie	Munro, Julia	Yurek, Jeff
Harris, Michael	Nicholls, Rick	
Hillier, Randy	Pettapiece, Randy	

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): All those opposed to the motion, please stand and be recognized by the Clerk.

Nays

Albanese, Laura	Duguid, Brad	McMahon, Eleanor
Anderson, Granville	Fife, Catherine	McMeekin, Ted
Armstrong, Teresa J.	Flynn, Kevin Daniel	Meilleur, Madeleine
Baker, Yvan	Fraser, John	Milczyn, Peter Z.
Ballard, Chris	Gates, Wayne	Moridi, Reza
Berardinetti, Lorenzo	Gretzky, Lisa	Murray, Glen R.
Bradley, James J.	Hatfield, Percy	Naidoo-Harris, Indira
Chan, Michael	Hoggarth, Ann	Oraziotti, David
Chiarelli, Bob	Hoskins, Eric	Potts, Arthur
Colle, Mike	Jaczek, Helena	Qaadri, Shafiq
Coteau, Michael	Lalonde, Marie-France	Rinaldi, Lou
Crack, Grant	Leal, Jeff	Sergio, Mario

Damerla, Dipika
Del Duca, Steven
Delaney, Bob
Dhillon, Vic
Dickson, Joe
Dong, Han

MacCharles, Tracy
Malhi, Harinder
Mangat, Amrit
Martins, Cristina
Matthews, Deborah
McGarry, Kathryn

Singh, Jagmeet
Sousa, Charles
Thibeault, Glenn
Vernile, Daiene
Wong, Soo
Wynne, Kathleen O.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): I declare the motion lost.

Motion negatived.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): It being past 6 o'clock, this House stands adjourned until 9 o'clock tomorrow morning.

The House adjourned at 1805.

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller):
The ayes are 25; the nays are 54.

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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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	
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Brown, Patrick (PC)	Simcoe North / Simcoe-Nord	Leader, Official Opposition / Chef de l'opposition officielle
Campbell, Sarah (NDP)	Kenora–Rainy River	
Chan, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Markham–Unionville	Minister of Citizenship, Immigration and International Trade / Ministre des Affaires civiques, de l'Immigration et du Commerce international
Chiarelli, Hon. / L'hon. Bob (LIB)	Ottawa West–Nepean / Ottawa-Ouest–Nepean	Minister of Energy / Ministre de l'Énergie
Clark, Steve (PC)	Leeds–Grenville	Deputy Leader, Official Opposition / Chef adjoint de l'opposition officielle
Coe, Lorne (PC)	Whitby–Oshawa	
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 Anti-Racism Minister Responsible for the 2015 Pan and Parapan American Games / Ministre responsable des Jeux panaméricains et parapanaméricains de 2015
Crack, Grant (LIB)	Glengarry–Prescott–Russell	
Damerla, Hon. / L'hon. Dipika (LIB)	Mississauga East–Cooksville / Mississauga-Est–Cooksville	Associate Minister of Health and Long-Term Care (Long-Term Care and Wellness) / Ministre associée de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée (Soins de longue durée et Promotion du mieux-être) Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille Minister of Transportation / Ministre des Transports
Del Duca, Hon. / L'hon. Steven (LIB)	Vaughan	
Delaney, Bob (LIB)	Mississauga–Streetsville	
Dhillon, Vic (LIB)	Brampton West / Brampton-Ouest	
Dickson, Joe (LIB)	Ajax–Pickering	
DiNovo, Cheri (NDP)	Parkdale–High Park	
Dong, Han (LIB)	Trinity–Spadina	
Duguid, Hon. / L'hon. Brad (LIB)	Scarborough Centre / Scarborough-Centre	Minister of Economic Development, Employment and Infrastructure / Ministre du Développement économique, de l'Emploi et de l'Infrastructure
Fedeli, Victor (PC)	Nipissing	
Fife, Catherine (NDP)	Kitchener–Waterloo	

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Flynn, Hon. / L'hon. Kevin Daniel (LIB)	Oakville	Minister of Labour / Ministre du Travail
Forster, Cindy (NDP)	Welland	
Fraser, John (LIB)	Ottawa South / Ottawa-Sud	
French, Jennifer K. (NDP)	Oshawa	
Gates, Wayne (NDP)	Niagara Falls	
Gélinas, France (NDP)	Nickel Belt	
Gravelle, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Thunder Bay–Superior North / Thunder Bay–Superior-Nord	Minister of Northern Development and Mines / Ministre du Développement du Nord et des Mines
Gretzky, Lisa (NDP)	Windsor West / Windsor-Ouest	
Hardeman, Ernie (PC)	Oxford	
Harris, Michael (PC)	Kitchener–Conestoga	
Hatfield, Percy (NDP)	Windsor–Tecumseh	
Hillier, Randy (PC)	Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington	
Hoggarth, Ann (LIB)	Barrie	
Horwath, Andrea (NDP)	Hamilton Centre / Hamilton-Centre	Leader, Recognized Party / Chef de parti reconnu Leader, New Democratic Party of Ontario / Chef du Nouveau parti démocratique de l'Ontario
Hoskins, Hon. / L'hon. Eric (LIB)	St. Paul's	Minister of Health and Long-Term Care / Ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée
Hudak, Tim (PC)	Niagara West–Glanbrook / Niagara- Ouest–Glanbrook	
Hunter, Hon. / L'hon. Mitzie (LIB)	Scarborough–Guildwood	Associate Minister of Finance (Ontario Retirement Pension Plan) / Ministre associée des Finances (Régime de retraite de la province de l'Ontario)
Jaczek, Hon. / L'hon. Helena (LIB)	Oak Ridges–Markham	Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille Minister of Community and Social Services / Ministre des Services sociaux et communautaires
Jones, Sylvia (PC)	Dufferin–Caledon	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	

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
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	
Miller, Norm (PC)	Parry Sound–Muskoka	
Miller, Paul (NDP)	Hamilton East–Stoney Creek / Hamilton-Est–Stoney Creek	Third Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Troisième vice-président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Moridi, Hon. / L'hon. Reza (LIB)	Richmond Hill	Minister of Research and Innovation / Ministre de la Recherche et de l'Innovation Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities / Ministre de la Formation et des Collèges et Universités
Munro, Julia (PC)	York–Simcoe	
Murray, Hon. / L'hon. Glen R. (LIB)	Toronto Centre / Toronto-Centre	Minister of the Environment and Climate Change / Ministre de l'Environnement et de l'Action en matière de changement climatique
Naidoo-Harris, Indira (LIB)	Halton	
Naqvi, Hon. / L'hon. Yasir (LIB)	Ottawa Centre / Ottawa-Centre	Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services / Ministre de la Sécurité communautaire et des Services correctionnels Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire du gouvernement
Natyshak, Taras (NDP)	Essex	
Nicholls, Rick (PC)	Chatham–Kent–Essex	Second Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Deuxième vice-président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Oraziotti, Hon. / L'hon. David (LIB)	Sault Ste. Marie	Minister of Government and Consumer Services / Ministre des Services gouvernementaux et des Services aux consommateurs
Pettapiece, Randy (PC)	Perth–Wellington	
Potts, Arthur (LIB)	Beaches–East York	
Qaadri, Shafiq (LIB)	Etobicoke North / Etobicoke-Nord	
Rinaldi, Lou (LIB)	Northumberland–Quinte West	
Sandals, Hon. / L'hon. Liz (LIB)	Guelph	Minister of Education / Ministre de l'Éducation
Sattler, Peggy (NDP)	London West / London-Ouest	
Scott, Laurie (PC)	Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock	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)	Bramalea–Gore–Malton	
Smith, Todd (PC)	Prince Edward–Hastings	
Sousa, Hon. / L'hon. Charles (LIB)	Mississauga South / Mississauga-Sud	Minister of Finance / Ministre des Finances
Tabuns, Peter (NDP)	Toronto–Danforth	
Takhar, Harinder S. (LIB)	Mississauga–Erindale	
Taylor, Monique (NDP)	Hamilton Mountain	
Thibeault, Glenn (LIB)	Sudbury	
Thompson, Lisa M. (PC)	Huron–Bruce	
Vanthof, John (NDP)	Timiskaming–Cochrane	
Vernile, Daiene (LIB)	Kitchener Centre / Kitchener-Centre	
Walker, Bill (PC)	Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound	
Wilson, Jim (PC)	Simcoe–Grey	Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire de l'opposition officielle
Wong, Soo (LIB)	Scarborough–Agincourt	
Wynne, Hon. / L'hon. Kathleen O. (LIB)	Don Valley West / Don Valley-Ouest	Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs / Ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales Premier / Première ministre Leader, Liberal Party of Ontario / Chef du Parti libéral de l'Ontario
Yakabuski, John (PC)	Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke	
Yurek, Jeff (PC)	Elgin–Middlesex–London	
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Grant Crack, Cheri DiNovo
Han Dong, Michael Harris
Sophie Kiwala, Todd Smith
Monique Taylor
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Christopher Tyrell

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Toby Barrett, Victor Fedeli
Catherine Fife, Ann Hoggarth
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Arthur Potts, Shafiq Qadri
Laurie Scott
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Soo Wong
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Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Lisa MacLeod
Han Dong, John Fraser
Ernie Hardeman, Percy Hatfield
Lisa MacLeod, Harinder Malhi
Julia Munro, Arthur Potts
Lou Rinaldi
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Valerie Quioc Lim

**Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills / Comité
permanent des règlements et des projets de loi d'intérêt privé**

Chair / Présidente: Indira Naidoo-Harris
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Kathryn McGarry
Lorenzo Berardinetti, Jennifer K. French
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**

Chair / Président: Peter Tabuns
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Jagmeet Singh
Granville Anderson, Lorne Coe
Vic Dhillon, Amrit Mangat
Gila Martow, Kathryn McGarry
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Glenn Thibeault
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