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Wednesday 2 March 2016

Mercredi 2 mars 2016

Speaker
Honourable Dave Levac

Clerk
Deborah Deller

Président
L'honorable Dave Levac

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
OF ONTARIO

Wednesday 2 March 2016

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE
DE L'ONTARIO

Mercredi 2 mars 2016

The House met at 0900.

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

Prayers.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

CLIMATE CHANGE MITIGATION
AND LOW-CARBON ECONOMY
ACT, 2016

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

Resuming the debate adjourned on March 1, 2016, on the motion for second 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): Further debate?

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: Speaker, I'm pleased today to lend my voice to Bill 172, the Climate Change Mitigation and Low-carbon Economy Act. We need to focus today on a credible plan to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Climate change, as we all know, is a serious challenge that we all want to address. That's why Ontarians across the province are already taking individual action to reduce their carbon footprint. Speaker, many have made their homes more energy efficient already, some have purchased hybrid cars, and others have invested in new, clean technologies that will transition Ontario into a low-carbon economy.

Clearly, the people of Ontario are willing to do their part, but unfortunately the Liberals are using this goodwill to introduce cap-and-trade. Again, Speaker, I want to emphasize that I do not think it's acceptable that Liberals are using Ontarians' goodwill, and use the environment as an excuse, to introduce their cash grab cap-and-trade. It has proven to be an ineffective tool to reduce emissions, and we've seen that in Europe already. The fact of the matter is that it greatly increases costs for families and businesses. When we already have driven out many manufacturers to our neighbouring states, this is a huge concern that must be addressed.

Specifically, we know that cap-and-trade will increase the cost of gas, groceries and home heating for families. It will put good, well-paying jobs at risk in our manufacturing sector, and it will shut out investment in new industries and facilities in our province.

We have met with many stakeholders, and they have told us they have been waiting for a cue from Ontario one way or the other, which will be the tipping point for whether they choose to invest in Ontario or run away from Ontario. I'm afraid the latter is probably what's going to be happening.

As I said before, Speaker, the Liberals' cap-and-trade scheme is a cash grab in the name of the environment, plain and simple. It puts a new tax on gasoline and home heating to raise revenue for the government, not to protect the environment. Again, the tax on gas and the increase in home heating is solely to raise revenue for the government to use at its will. It has absolutely nothing to do with protecting the environment.

Speaker, you don't have to take my word for it. I can back my words up with those of someone else. Just listen to what former finance minister Greg Sorbara had to say recently on The Agenda with Steve Paikin last week. Sorbara said that once the government sells its "imaginary product called carbon credits," it will raise prices for "virtually every product" that Ontarians buy. I'm going to repeat that: Greg Sorbara said that once the government sells its "imaginary product called carbon credits," prices for "virtually every product" in Ontario will increase.

He wasn't afraid to tell it the way it is. Sorbara said, "Although the minister said there are no tax increases, the fact is that there's a \$1.9-billion increase—I call it a flow-through tax—that will ultimately affect consumers.... It's interesting to raise money and say, at the same time, you're not raising taxes." Speaker, it's high time this government is honest and tells the truth to Ontarians.

I always find it interesting when a Liberal is willing to point out the spin of his former colleagues.

Hon. Jeff Leal: I could quote a few Conservatives.

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: The facts are—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Let's start off this morning with—

Hon. David Zimmer: Good morning.

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

I'd like to see less talk across the floor and more through the Speaker. If you have a point of order that's in order—

Hon. Jeff Leal: I sincerely apologize.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Thanks.

Let's start off on a good foot today. I don't want to have to go that way. Thanks.

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: Just yesterday, my colleague from York-Simcoe, when debating Bill 151, the Waste-

Free Ontario Act, said that a good way to start cutting down on waste is limiting the amount of bureaucracy this government has grown.

Coming back to this particular situation in Bill 172, the facts are that the Liberals' cap-and-trade scheme puts a new tax on gasoline and home heating, which will ultimately create excessive new bureaucracy. In fact, Mr. Sorbara highlighted this very concern last week when he said, "Cap-and-trade requires a very significant bureaucracy. And this government has a very large bureaucracy. The last thing it needs is to add hundreds of people to the offices around Queen's Park to deal with cap-and-trade." Speaker, you won't be surprised when I say that I couldn't agree more with that statement. You and I both know that we need to limit the size of government, not increase it.

Worst of all, cap-and-trade has proven to be an ineffective tool to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Again, Sorbara called his own party out for moving forward with cap-and-trade, saying, "There's no evidence, anywhere in the world, that the cap-and-trade system actually does work ... to significantly reduce carbon emissions." Again, Mr. Sorbara said, "There's no evidence, anywhere in the world, that the cap-and-trade system actually does work ... to ... reduce carbon emissions. Until I see that evidence, I have to be a little bit skeptical about the whole scheme." That's right: Mr. Sorbara called the Liberal cap-and-trade initiative a scheme. He also went on to say that it's going to bring more money to the government to use as it will.

It's absolutely stunning that senior members of the Liberal Party don't even agree with the direction this government is taking. This policy direction is truly a major disappointment, and it is going to be a very sad legacy for Premier Wynne and her cabinet. Four years away from Ontario's 2020 emissions target, this government had a chance. They had a chance to introduce a credible plan to tackle climate change. But the Liberals have chosen to do the opposite, protecting their own pockets and cash flow.

Unlike British Columbia, the government's cap-and-trade scheme lacks accountability and creates a new slush fund that can be used to finance Liberal pet projects. Just think: If they had reined in their mismanagement, reined in their scandals and reined in their waste, we wouldn't have to be in this position. We could have had a well-thought-out, credible approach to addressing climate change.

The manner in which this government is acting is flat-out wrong. To raise money in the name of the environment is unacceptable. What is even more unacceptable is to use the money raised in the name of the environment for covering their butts to pay for years of Liberal scandal, waste and mismanagement, as I've mentioned before. With this government's track record, we know we cannot trust the Liberals to prioritize the environment over their spending addiction.

0910

Ontarians expect and deserve a government that will take climate change seriously, and they deserve a govern-

ment that will take action to reduce greenhouse gas emissions while protecting taxpayers and our economy. I will cover the problems with the Liberal scheme in greater detail in my speech, but let's talk about consumers right now. I would like to go over the costs this plan will create.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Are we all done now? Good. Quiet: That's good. Continue.

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: I would like to go over the costs this plan will create for consumers and businesses. In reading the government's budget document, it's clear that the Liberals have not provided a fair picture of the long-term costs of their cap-and-trade scheme. Last week, I was telling people: You have to focus on the long term. When the Premier spoke about minimal charges, the reality is that that was for the first year or two. It's unacceptable to mislead Ontarians in that manner.

Since 2003, the cost of electricity has gone up 375%, and now we have 570,000 households living in energy poverty in this province. Apparently, that is still not enough, because cap-and-trade will raise the cost of the natural gas component of our power supply, and that will be reflected in our hydro bills. If you heat your home with natural gas, those bills will also increase. By 2025, some analysts project gasoline costs will increase by \$400 a year and natural gas costs will increase by \$475 annually. Think about those families. Think about the families who want to send their kids to camp or register them for hockey or for dance. That money means a lot. I dare say, I worry a lot about our seniors on fixed incomes. How are they going to manage this increase? The total bill amount of household energy bills, including electricity, gasoline and natural gas, could increase by as much as \$1,500 a year, in addition to the existing scheduled increase for electricity.

The impact on businesses is even more alarming. For a medium-sized business, analysts are projecting increases in natural gas and electricity costs ranging from \$120,000 to \$1 million. With those excessive new costs, businesses will be forced to lay off workers; and with every lost job, there's a family who has lost their livelihood. That's what this is boiling down to. How many more Ontario households will be driven into energy poverty by these increases? Many businesses will not be able to absorb that level of increase for energy. To survive, they will have to pass those costs on to consumers, resulting in an escalating decline in our standard of living. It is clear that the Liberals have not thought about this scheme's long-term impact on energy costs. They haven't even thought about the impact on our industry. They haven't thought about its effect on our border economy and our competitiveness within the North American marketplace.

The only thing the Liberals care about is the revenue the scheme will generate. And it will generate a lot. The Liberals plan to rake in \$1.9 billion a year in new money. Yes, you heard that correctly. They plan to raise \$1.9 billion, which they then can spend on whatever they choose. We know the Liberals' motive behind cap-and-trade is all about the money, no matter what they say.

But there is also a secondary Liberal motive, and that's public relations. Now, let's talk about the Liberal PR stunt for a moment. The government rushed to table Bill 172 and panicked to release its cap-and-trade regulation, all so that Kathleen Wynne and Glen Murray could pat themselves on the back at the photo op this week in Vancouver. The Liberals disregarded the concerns and economic advice of industry just so they could have their cap-and-trade scheme released in time for the First Ministers' meeting.

Ontario PCs focus on environmental results, and in focusing on environmental results, we will keep life affordable for families and businesses. Unfortunately, the Liberals' focus is taking more money from Ontarians and setting up PR stunts to garner media attention. We all have seen recently how media stunts can go awry. Do these sound like priorities of a government that is serious about addressing climate change and protecting our economy?

I think that members participating in this debate know my opinion. If the Liberals were serious about climate change, they would be focused on measures that can produce results, not setting up a stock market for carbon.

Let's talk about what really matters here. In the spirit of protecting the environment, we must look at innovation. To effectively reduce emissions, the PC Party of Ontario understands that we must advance innovation, increase energy efficiency and improve energy conservation. That means investing in transit, modernizing buildings and working with industry to develop realistic improvements to production processes. Unlike cap-and-trade, these are all proven ways to substantially reduce emissions. There are jurisdictions around the world that are doing amazing things in terms of developing environmentally friendly urban plans to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, but I'll get to that in a moment.

With the PC Party of Ontario, technological advancement has always been our party's approach. For one, I would like to remind members opposite that it was the former PC government that started the phase-out of coal in Ontario. I've spoken about it many times. Elizabeth Witmer, a Huron county native, started that ball rolling.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): I don't know if the member from Newmarket–Aurora is talking to his phone. I hear a constant mumble coming from him. If you could keep it down, I'd appreciate it.

Mr. Chris Ballard: I'll dial it down.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Thank you.

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: Our focus on advancing innovation underpinned our efforts. Speaker, let's be clear: Without our leadership on the phase-out of coal, the Liberals would have failed to take any action in this area. In fact, one of the reasons that the Liberals chose to follow our strong leadership on the environment is because the Harper government gave them nearly \$600 million.

Laughter.

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: Yes, Speaker, you heard it right. They may laugh about it, but we actually will never

step away from that. I know that members opposite don't like to acknowledge these facts—just listen to them right now—because they begin to expose the very thin veneer of celebrated Liberal myths. But let's be clear for the record: The Liberals continued the coal phase-out that the former PC government started because of the \$600-million investment from the Harper government. When I reflect on this history, I think of the famous quote by John Adams: "Facts are stubborn things; and whatever may be our wishes, our inclinations, or the dictates of our passion, they cannot alter the state of facts and evidence."

The important point is that the Ontario PCs have always understood that it is the government's responsibility to have a credible plan to reduce emissions while protecting taxpayers. And, unlike the Liberals, our focus is on advancing innovation, increasing efficiency and conserving energy, not raising energy costs and taxes for hard-working Ontarians.

I mentioned the opportunity to attend the climate summit in Paris. When I walked around the pavilions where jurisdictions from around the world were showcasing their approach to reducing greenhouse gas emissions, something was evident. It popped out, and I couldn't let go of it: Ontario—this Premier—likes to pretend that they're leading the way, and unfortunately we are so far behind. The event showcased tech innovations that are on the markets today or should be invested in that make a greater contribution to cutting emissions than cap-and-trade will.

The failure of government to take questions at the press conference when the MOU was signed with Manitoba was actually a sad day—for me, anyway. It's interesting that the three provinces—Ontario, Manitoba and Quebec—hosted a media event where they were going to celebrate the signing of the MOU. As quickly as they came on the stage, they were escorted off without any questions. I would dare say that one of the reasons is that when I was visiting with colleagues and visiting with other jurisdictions—other countries—they were asking, "Why is Ontario following through and going with a cap-and-trade scheme? Don't you know how it has resulted in Europe?"

0920

Speaker, in case you don't know, the European cap-and-trade system was absolutely polluted with fraud. The targets were mis-set and it was an absolute failure. It raised a flag, and many people that I spoke to were shaking their heads as to why Ontario would follow through and not learn from their mistakes. So the discussions, as I said, were quite interesting in Paris.

I think we need to focus in on what really matters. Again, that comes back to being fair to Ontario taxpayers and Ontario businesses, all the while focusing on the innovation and the technology we need, and a sincere commitment to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

Let's talk about the trading scheme again. I think it's worthwhile to talk about some of the problems that actually exist within cap-and-trade markets, as I alluded to just moments ago.

Many of you will remember the Chicago Climate Exchange, which traded greenhouse gas emission allowances from 2003 to 2010. By 2008, the Chicago Climate Exchange was trading 10 million tonnes of carbon allowances monthly, and the price of offsets rose to \$7.40. However, a year later, due to a lack of activity in US carbon markets, the price of a metric tonne of carbon fell from over \$7 down to 10 cents. The exchange was closed in 2010.

The other cap-and-trade system that has experienced a litany of problems, as I alluded to, is Europe's emissions trading system. Shortly after the ETS started up in 2005, problems with permits led to a collapse in prices, which resulted in a drop in value to close to zero. Disturbingly, some of these industries and manufacturers, which had received free allowances from the government, raised the price of their products as though they had actually incurred costs. The government ended up distributing so many free permits that the price of carbon dropped again, making it cheaper for companies to purchase offsets than to make emission reductions.

A significant source of instability in the ETS has been fraud. A recent audit of that system revealed that attempts to prevent fraudulent activity in the market are still inadequate. Critics suggest that the ETS has been a costly exercise which has done little to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. The price of permits has dropped from €30 to less than €5 due to permits that were given for activities that did not really reduce emissions, security breaches and phony credits. Interpol has even charged a major financial institution with involvement in carbon permit fraud, and investigators estimate that billions of euros have been lost due to this activity.

Speaker, given the Liberals' history of waste and mismanagement, how can we trust them to operate such a complex initiative? I'll let you ponder that for a second, as I wet my whistle here.

We've seen time and again that they take from Peter to give to Paul. They introduce a tax in the name of health, and where did that money go? Directly into coffers. We have proof and so many reasons why we can't trust this government.

Let's talk about Liberal targets as well. Speaker, it might be helpful to review the position of Canada and Ontario with regard to greenhouse gas emissions.

Approximately 80% of greenhouse gas emissions from human sources comes from the burning of fossil fuels and various industrial processes, like driving vehicles, electricity production, heating and cooling of buildings, and transportation of goods. While global emissions have been growing, the bulk of that growth has been in emerging markets and developing nations. Canada produces 1.6% of global emissions. Due to increasing emissions levels from these developing countries, Canada's percentage share of global emissions is expected to decline.

Again, to the members opposite: I ask you to really listen here. Canada produces 1.6% of global emissions, and because of what has already happened and because other countries have greater targets to achieve, Canada's

percentage of shared global emissions is expected to decline.

Realistically, we live in a large country, often with long driving distances between cities and without a great deal of public transport outside of major urban areas.

I can't help but reflect back on last Thursday and some of the media coverage that the budget received. Specifically, Global News did a good job of challenging the finance minister on his thoughts. It's quite interesting when a finance minister, a senior cabinet minister, so clearly has a disconnect with the rest of Ontario, when he would submit to the reporter, Alan Carter, that life is going to be easier because of cap-and-trade, because we're going to encourage people to use public transit. We're going to get people off the roads. Realistically—

Mr. Todd Smith: Naive.

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: Naive, or just totally wrong, because outside of the GTHA, north of Highway 7, how many of us have communities that have the opportunity to utilize public transit?

Then let's talk about heating homes. We need to heat our homes six to seven months of the year, and in the summer, we use air conditioning. Driving, heating and cooling are the necessities of life.

Ontario produces 23.5% of Canada's total emissions. Now, let's not forget that Canada's total share of global emissions is only 1.6%, and Ontario produces 23.5% of that small percentage. So what does that mean? It means that Ontario's global share of greenhouse gas emissions is about 0.38%. That's right, Speaker—less than half a percentage point, and look at what it's going to cost Ontarians and Ontario businesses. This government is just rubbing its hands, waiting eagerly to rake in the \$1.9 billion, because we have 0.38% of greenhouse gas emissions at the global level. Considering that Ontario's economy has always had a strong manufacturing and industrial sector and that we live in a climate which requires energy-intensive heating and cooling, I feel that it's important to keep that 0.38% figure in mind.

Going through the Liberal government's climate change strategy, which outlined the government's vision and objectives with regard to mitigating climate change, I gave a great deal of thought to the emission reduction targets of 37% below 1990 levels by 2030, and 80% below 1990 levels by 2050. The question in my mind is this: Are these realistic goals, and what would be the cost, both economic and social, to achieve them?

Ms. Sylvia Jones: Stretch goals.

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: Yes. Are they realistic, or are they just stretch goals, as my colleague from Peel-Dufferin suggested?

Mr. Speaker, there is a great danger in setting arbitrary goals when dealing with energy and economic matters, because energy is the lifeblood of an economy. A reliable, affordable and sufficient supply of energy is inextricably linked with economic sustainability. Industry, manufacturers and businesses provide employment which in turn supports our hospitals, schools, health care system and social agencies. We must be clear here: It would take

a technological transformation of our society to reach the Liberal goals. That means our focus must be on innovation and not the cash grab that they have introduced through their cap-and-trade scheme. Without realistic and affordable developments to change how we heat and cool our homes and power our vehicles, given current technology, achieving these targets would literally bring our economy to a standstill, or require a massive wealth transfer to purchase carbon allowances from outside of our province, or perhaps a combination of both of those two scenarios.

Ontarians are rightly questioning whether the proposed cap-and-trade scheme is the most effective method of reducing greenhouse gas emissions and if it is a responsible use of scarce taxpayer dollars. Yes, I'm sure you would agree, Speaker, that tax dollars are very scarce here in Ontario, and we do need to use them responsibly and wisely. I'm going to talk in a moment about how cap-and-trade is not a wise use of those dollars.

Cap-and-trade around the world has been proven to be ineffective. Between 2005 and 2013, Nova Scotia and New Brunswick achieved the largest emissions reductions of all Canadian provinces, without the use of carbon pricing. Experts have been clear that the price for carbon needed to meet future emission targets and change consumption patterns would have to be much higher than what is being proposed.

For example, Mr. Paul Boothe, a member of the Eco-fiscal Commission, recently stated that in order for Canada to meet the greenhouse gas reduction targets that it agreed to at the Paris summit, a carbon tax of \$150 to \$200 would be needed. So it appears that these initial costs that we heard about last week, the cost increases on gasoline and natural gas, are just the tip of the iceberg.

0930

At this point, Speaker, I would also like to recognize Ms. Aldyen Donnelly, the president of WDA Consulting, for the excellent article she has published on this topic. Ms. Donnelly has advised both industry and governments on emission reduction strategies. Ms. Donnelly's observation on cap-and-trade programs is that they are "inefficient and regressive" and allow governments to "pick corporate winners and losers." Where have we seen that before? Just think of their dismal green energy failure. It's a very concerning situation when it's almost like déjà vu or Groundhog Day. Here we go again, with the Liberal government setting themselves up to pick corporate winners and losers.

I'd like to paraphrase a statement from Ms. Donnelly that is especially pertinent to the proposed Liberal cap-and-trade program, stating that "carbon/energy taxes translate into green goods-producing job growth is ... a myth." That sounds very similar to Mr. Greg Sorbara's comments earlier. She went on to say that 100% of the job growth in carbon/high-energy-dominated jurisdictions has been in the public sector, as goods-producing jobs flee. Again, 100% of job growth in carbon/high-energy-dominated jurisdictions has been in the public sector, as goods-producing jobs flee.

We've talked about the leakage. We've talked about how we're nervous that this Liberal cap-and-trade scheme will drive business to our neighbouring states. Unfortunately, if they stay the route, that's exactly what's going to happen here in Ontario. In looking at existing cap-and-trade markets, other analysts have noted that cap-and-trade has not so far proven to be an efficient means to reduce emissions. Reductions have been achieved through economic downturns, technological advances, product standards, changes to alternate fuels and energy-intensive industry moving to other jurisdictions—and there's that leakage that I spoke about.

At the end of the day, the Liberal government's cap-and-trade approach appears to be more about raising government revenues and economic control than making meaningful progress towards lowering greenhouse gas emissions and mitigating climate change. The purpose of Bill 172 is to establish a price on carbon by means of a cap-and-trade program that will change the behaviour of everyone across the province and allow Ontario to link to Quebec and California in the Western Climate Initiative to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. The government of Ontario "envision[s], by 2050, a thriving society generating fewer or zero greenhouse gas emissions. Businesses and innovators will be creating world-leading low-carbon technologies and products that drive new economic growth, productivity and job creation."

Mr. Speaker, before we begin to even talk about zero emissions, perhaps we should examine some mundane realities. It's no secret that this Liberal government has increased Ontario's debt to over \$300 billion. I believe this past Thursday we heard it was going to be \$308 billion—unacceptable. The province's fiscal situation is dire. We no longer have the luxury of stretch goals. They have to be let go of. We don't have the luxury of stretch goals, wasteful spending or implementing costly initiatives without clear, empirical evidence that the program is fact-based, will fulfill its mandate and that benchmarks will be met in an efficient, cost-effective manner.

Ontarians have a right to expect that—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Yes, hi. If you want to have an ongoing conversation, you might want to take it outside—the member from Etobicoke Centre. Please. Actually, there were only four people that weren't involved in a conversation. It's getting tough to even hear the speaker when she's speaking.

Thanks so much.

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: Thank you, Speaker.

Again, the province's fiscal situation is dire, and Ontarians have a right to expect that a bill which will impose additional financial burdens will be thoroughly vetted with regard to costs and benefits and that it is in the public interest to proceed. There's no more meat on the bones, so to speak.

If the Liberal government is going to introduce a cap-and-trade scheme to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, then they had better be clear about the long-term costs of this program and exactly what tangible emission reduc-

tions will be realized. We've had enough of their stretch goals.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Okay. I've asked you three times. I can hear everything you guys are saying, just about. Why are you so loud? Can't you just take it outside, the three of you? A lot of times you people yell to each other rather than go and sit beside each other. I'm sorry you're disappointed, but I've got a job to do.

Continue.

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: If the Liberal government is going to introduce a cap-and-trade scheme to reduce emissions, they had better be clear about the long-term costs. We want to know exactly the cost of this program, exactly what tangible emission reductions will be realized, or if Ontario will meet its targets mainly through purchasing carbon allowances from its partners in the Western Climate Initiative.

Let's talk about buying emission reductions. Ontario's emission target for 2020 is 150 megatonnes, yet the province's emissions are expected to reach 168 megatonnes. To achieve Ontario's targets, emissions will have to fall to 110 megatonnes by 2030 and 35 megatonnes by 2050.

Dave Sawyer of EnviroEconomics projects a gap of 18 megatonnes in Ontario's 2020 target of 15% below 1990. In order to close that gap, Mr. Sawyer's analysis projects that Ontario emitters would have to purchase 11.5 megatonnes of allowances from Western Climate Initiative partners. Some of what we're hearing is that many of those credits will have to be purchased from California in US dollars. Does that make any sense?

Ontario could reduce the other 6.5 megatonnes at the WCI allowance price in 2020 of C\$17.16 per tonne. The cost for the Ontario 6.5-megatonne abatement would be approximately \$55 million, and the cost for Ontario emitters to purchase the 11.5 megatonnes of carbon allowances from the WCI initiative partners would be worth \$205 million.

The EnviroEconomics analysis assumed a coverage of 85% of Ontario's emissions in 2020 while the Liberal announcement puts the figure at 82%. The government expects revenues of \$1.9 billion in the first year: 60% of this \$1.9 billion would come from transportation and 27% from buildings. EnviroEconomics estimates auction revenue to be approximately eight times greater than the actual cost of emission reductions. So the total cost for Ontario to close the 18-megatonne gap to achieve its 2020 target would be \$261 million.

Let's look at these carbon allowances. Large emitters in Ontario are paying \$205 million to help Ontario achieve its 2020 target. According to Ms. Donnelly, there have been concerns raised about California's carbon market with regard to the high number of free allowances distributed, accounting practices and the actual reduction value of the carbon allowance. Due to these concerns, none of the other US states that participated in the Western Climate Initiative have linked their emissions trading markets to California. If Ontario emitters are planning to

buy these California allowances, do these allowances represent meaningful emission reductions or meaningless paper proxies? Why should Ontarians send their money to another jurisdiction to reduce emissions there? Surely, the public would prefer that their tax dollars be spent on environmental initiatives right here within the province of Ontario.

Speaker, we should think carefully about the beneficial environmental improvements that \$261 million could fund in Ontario, or what cleaner technology upgrades Ontario companies could afford to install with that money—technology that would make an actual reduction in greenhouse gases.

The other problem with California carbon allowances is that they are not recognized by the US Environmental Protection Agency due to the double-counting of reductions. Ms. Donnelly correctly raises the question that when the Environmental Protection Agency sets out greenhouse gas emission tariffs on imports from Quebec and Ontario, will the EPA recognize carbon allowances that Quebec and Ontario bought from California, when the EPA doesn't accept their reduction claims in the US?

0940

There are so many questions, and in meeting with stakeholders, the issue of the higher number of free allowances given to large California emitters has been raised. Industry and manufacturers are concerned that the carbon allowances that they buy from California emitters were given to them free by the government. Not only do these allowances not represent an actual emissions reduction; this imbalance puts Ontario industry at a competitive disadvantage.

For example, in California, natural gas distributors receive free allowances that they must use to assist their customers with cost increases, which helps protect smaller natural gas users who have no other fuel options. The natural gas industry in Ontario, conversely, is concerned that they are not receiving initial free allowances like their counterparts in Quebec and California. If there is not a level playing field in this province, how can our natural gas industry remain competitive?

Other issues raised by stakeholders are that volatility in the regulations and the price of carbon will create an uncertain climate for investment. Industry stakeholders have been clear that they are concerned at the speed in which this cap-and-trade scheme is being moved forward, and the difficulty in complying with regulations, oversight enforcement and reporting mechanisms. While some large emitters will receive free carbon allowances and will be able to afford the administrative cost of compliance, these extra costs will become one more regulatory burden for small to medium-sized businesses. Many of these same small and medium-sized businesses, which provide 88% of the province's jobs, may not have viable options for switching fuel or cutting back on transportation costs. The cost of compliance with cap-and-trade will remove capital from businesses that may have been used to expand the operation or hire new staff.

While the government—the Liberal government in particular—will wax poetic about all the new clean tech-

nology and alternate energy jobs this cap-and-trade system will provide, I think a healthy dose of skepticism is warranted. Again, we can't trust them to get it right. We heard claims from the Liberals about how the HST and the Green Energy Act would create 165,000 jobs, and we all know how that has turned out. Despite previous unsuccessful attempts at social engineering, the Liberal government is once again aiming to change everyone's behaviour via this cap-and-trade scheme. However, analysts have been clear that the price of carbon would have to be very high in order to effect change.

As I unfortunately hear so often from my constituents, an alarming number of Ontario residents and businesses are struggling to make ends meet. I'm sure we all have constituents who have come to us with that problem and that concern. When a bill is introduced that will increase costs for Ontarians even further, as legislators we have a duty right here in this House to review that measure very carefully to see if increasing the financial burden on residents and businesses is absolutely necessary, and if it is, to minimize costs where we can and to make sure we're giving the best value for their tax dollars. But this Liberal government, time and again, has not done that.

The one thing I do not understand is that despite the public being very vocal that rising energy costs are causing undue hardships to both families and businesses, the Liberal government has once again introduced a measure that will increase the cost of electricity, heating and gasoline. If ratepayers cannot afford their electricity costs now, logically it follows that they won't be able to afford the increases this government has announced as of last week, and natural gas or gasoline either. This magical thinking, these stretch goals that bring the government to think Ontarians can continue to absorb endless costs and increases, have got to end.

Now let's talk specifically about Bill 172. With all of these concerns in mind, we have to drill down on this particular bill. Some observers of this issue may feel like they're having a little *déjà vu*, or, as I said or alluded to earlier, watching the movie *Groundhog Day*. They may ask, "Didn't the Liberal government champion a cap-and-trade scheme in the middle of a recession seven years ago?" The answer is: Yes, they did. In fact, the Liberals passed amendments to the Environmental Protection Act in 2009 under Bill 185 to set up a cap-and-trade scheme. Then they established reporting regulations for greenhouse gas emissions. At that time, we were told that this bill was vital and that the Liberals would be setting up cap-and-trade any day. That was 2009.

In fact, the former Liberal environment minister said during debate, "Bill 185 is a critical piece of legislation that, if passed, would allow us to create a ... cap-and-trade system for Ontario that could link to other emerging North American systems." Well, Speaker, it appears Bill 185 wasn't such a critical piece of legislation after all. Out of fear of collapsing Ontario's economy after the great recession, the Liberals shelved their emissions-trading law and waited for a more opportune time to lock the province into the scheme. With the law on the books

it was left to collect dust for a few years, but with the reporting regulations in place everyone assumed it was only a matter of time until the Liberals imposed their cap-and-trade scheme.

But that wasn't the case. The Liberals missed the 2012 start date for the Western Climate Initiative, and they didn't say a word. Why was that? A minority government, perhaps? But I'd look at my colleagues who were elected in 2011. Our party asked questions about the scheme, but the Liberals pretended that it was a figment of our imagination; that is, until last year when it became politically advantageous for the Premier to, once again, push cap-and-trade.

The Premier stood in front of the cameras—yet another photo op in April 2015—to proclaim she was going to introduce cap-and-trade for our children and grandchildren. Never mind the skyrocketing hydro; forget about the increased cost of living; and, according to the Premier, leave the province's \$300-billion debt to the next generation.

It's not really hard to see why the Liberals have this arrogant perspective. They have grown so out of touch with ordinary Ontarians that they can't understand the priorities of families who are struggling to make ends meet and who are sometimes left scrounging for some extra cash just to pay the next heating or electricity bill. They can't understand that the increased hydro rates are leaving seniors with fixed incomes in the cold during the winter. These are our realities in our ridings.

As I said earlier, Speaker, the only things that matter to this Premier and this government are taking more money out of Ontarians' pockets and smiling for the cameras at a good photo op. The Premier herself admitted that cap-and-trade is just about the money when, last year, in April 2015, I was standing there and she arrogantly challenged the media to "go ahead and call it a tax." We just shook our heads.

The troubling part is that this tax is about to become a reality very soon. Here we are debating Bill 172 seven years after the government passed its first cap-and-trade legislation, yet the speakers want you to believe they're sincere when they say they need to scrap the old cap-and-trade law to replace it with a new one. Is this government saying that they failed with the first law? We know they failed with many other initiatives. Or is this government's true motivation to pass a new cap-and-trade law that could be used, as I said, as a PR document to peddle the Liberals' latest spin?

I think the answer is that the Minister of the Environment and Climate Change needs to be honest and truthful, not only with this House but Ontario's people as well.

Let's talk about the regulatory scheme. The old cap-and-trade law and Bill 172 share one distinct feature: Virtually every pertinent detail is left to regulation. All we know from reading Bill 172 is that the Liberals design the system, set the rules, select the participants, appoint the officials and, of course, pick the winners and losers, just like their failed green energy scheme. Because every-

thing is left to regulation, the government at any time could change the structure of the scheme, the trading rules, the reporting requirements or the powers of the minister to intervene in the carbon market—all dangerous red flags right there.

To quell opposition, the Liberals have doled out free allowances to certain sectors while only targeting the natural gas and petroleum industries with excessive new compliance costs. Still, industries that have bought into the cap-and-trade need to see it for what it really is.

The Liberal scheme is a Trojan Horse under the banner of a market-driven solution. It's a Trojan Horse. Does everybody know and recall the story about the Trojan Horse? Once it opens up, it'll be nothing more than command-and-control economics. This is a very dangerous path that this Liberal government has chosen to put Ontario on, and I am very concerned about the future for taxpayers, our seniors on fixed income and the next generation.

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The government will create onerous new rules for the industry that, if broken, will result in severe penalties. Like any command-and-control structure, we know that the game will be rigged. Those who will stand to benefit are the Liberals and their friends, as I've alluded to before, just like their green energy scheme. It's very frustrating and maddening.

In terms of administration, of course, the two groups that stand to lose are Ontario taxpayers and manufacturers, as I've mentioned before. And there are no signs that this government will do anything to prevent excessive increases to natural gas, fuel and electricity bills. Why would the Liberals care in the first place? After all, they need \$300 million just to set up cap-and-trade, and that doesn't even account for the scheme's operational costs.

The Liberals have provided estimates. We know that the environment ministry will need a department of staff to pore over registration, reporting and verification data from the companies that are in the system. Of course, part of the funding for these services will be from general revenue and part will be from administrative fees. How much will the fees be? We don't know, Speaker. How many fees will there be? Yet again, we don't know, and that's because, again, the Liberals have not released the regulations to the public.

Let's talk about enforcement. As I said before, we don't know much about the real meat on the bones, but unlike Bill 151, the Liberals are relying on existing enforcement officers rather than creating a whole new branch of cap-and-trade cops. Bill 151 is creating a whole new team of "waste cops" but, with regard to cap-and-trade, they are keeping the enforcement close at hand. Speaker, I must say it's always a pleasant surprise to see when the Liberals don't include provisions that attempt to create an entirely new enforcement branch for one proposed law.

Bill 172 contains stiff penalties for serious offences like fraud, market manipulation and insider trading.

These offences, which are rampant in other cap-and-trade markets around the world, must be dealt with swiftly and harshly, but prevention is also the key. One way to prevent these offences is to deter people. Another, and I believe the better, way to prevent these crimes is not to set up a cap-and-trade market in the first place.

There are much simpler pricing systems, and do you know what? The Liberals have completely overlooked them. They are so ingrained, as I said. They first set up their mechanism legislation in 2009. They were not interested in any other pricing system. They totally ignored all the aggregated comments that were generated through climate change consultations last winter. Every consultation I attended—and I attended four and I read the reports from the other three—the general consensus, by the people attending them, was that perhaps a carbon tax was a better place to land. But the Liberals, knowing what they needed, knowing that they were cash-strapped, knowing that they had to get their hands on dollars in a quick way, continued to favour their cap-and-trade scheme. We all know that simple pricing systems are easier to enforce, require less administration, and don't create a system that can be easily gamed by fraudsters. Again, the Liberals set their stake in the sand in 2009, and here we are dealing with it today in 2016.

In terms of penalties Bill 172 also covers administrative infractions, which one would assume would be failures to submit reporting or registration information. But of course, Ontario businesses don't know what would be considered an administrative contravention because—you guessed it—we're still waiting for yet another regulation to define exactly what that means. All we know from the bill is that individuals can face fines up to \$1 million and that they are subject to absolute liability. Again, for everyone who's listening, because this part is important, individuals can face fines up to \$1 million and they are subject to absolute liability.

Speaker, I just want to make sure everyone is clear on what "absolute liability" is. Subsection 54(10) says that a person must pay an administrative penalty applies "even if,

"(a) the person took all reasonable steps to prevent the contravention; or

"(b) at the time of the contravention, the person had an honest and reasonable belief in a mistaken set of facts that, if true, would have rendered the contravention innocent."

Speaker, could you imagine, if you had a business that was about to be regulated under this proposed law, that even though you do your best to comply, even if you're honest, even if you took all reasonable steps forward, you're guilty? That's a daunting standard to set for this industry, in this province. The minister should clarify this section, and how the regulation will work, as soon as possible.

Now let's talk about the greenhouse gas reduction account. Of course, there's total immunity for the government, just like there's total discretion for the minister on how to spend the \$1.9 billion created from the cap-

and-trade every year. This is the part of the proposed act that I have a lot of trouble with. According to Bill 172, the money from emissions trading will flow into general revenue, and the amounts will be recorded in the Liberals' GHG reduction account, or slush fund. The environment minister then has the authority to decide which programs and projects will receive funding from the amounts recorded in this account.

Speaker, the government has said it is going to use cap-and-trade revenues to cover its \$325-million spending spree on the Green Investment Fund, but we all know it will be used for much more than just this. The Liberals will rake in cap-and-trade money and use it to pay for years of government waste and a long list of Liberal pet projects.

In schedule 1, there is a lot to be said, so I'd like to speak a little bit more about my concerns about what projects the Liberals intend to fund with the cap-and-trade money. Schedule 1 has them all set out.

There are segments of schedule 1 that truly are alarming. It states that projects which reduce greenhouse gases may be funded, in whole or in part, from this account. It then lists different types of projects that would qualify: "The production or installation of renewable, low-carbon, carbon-free ... energy." It sounds like more turbines, perhaps.

"The research, development ... of technologies that eliminate or reduce" the use of greenhouse-gas-emitting fuels: It will be interesting to see where that lands.

Another segment is, "Distributed renewable energy generation and ... technologies to support load-shifting, energy storage, net metering and other measures to eliminate the need for grid-based electricity during natural gas peaking."

Honestly, Speaker. Apparently, this Liberal government did not learn anything from the economic and technical chaos unleashed on this province through their Green Energy Act. In Bill 172, the government is planning to double down with another ill-advised energy scheme. Instead of private companies borrowing capital and building energy projects, it appears the Liberal government will be using the revenue extracted from Ontarians through the increases in gasoline, natural gas, and goods and services to fund renewable energy initiatives. If these types of projects were cost-effective, the private sector would already be investing in them. Why does the government have to dabble? If they were cost-effective, market-driven initiatives would be leading the way with private investment. In terms of emissions, will these technologies ever recover the emissions required to construct them? A quick Google search provides an extensive list of renewable energy firms which have gone bankrupt as soon as their government subsidies ran out. It is a sad state of affairs.

Now we have 570,000 households living in energy poverty in this province. I question whether Ontario rate-payers can afford more expensive, subsidized power, especially as our electricity supply is about 80% emissions-free already.

This section of schedule 1, combined with Bill 135, which transfers independent planning and procurement authority from the IESO, and the transmission approval from the Ontario Energy Board, to the Minister of Energy, is bound to cause further instability in the energy sector.

As we all read in the Financial Post, Ontario is the most indebted sub-sovereign borrower in the world. We most certainly do not have money to waste on unproven generation sources which will not be able to power a modern industrialized society.

Let's talk about agriculture for a second as well. I'm proud that my riding is a breadbasket for Ontario, and I'm concerned about the impact that this Liberal scheme will have on our agricultural industry.

As I reflect on it, I'd like to share with you a few lines from a press release my office received back on December 18 from the Ontario Federation of Agriculture that I think perfectly highlights the concerns I've been hearing from our farming community.

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"New regulations to reduce emissions mean carbon will have a price tag at the farm. That means farmers could see the cost of inputs rise as additional charges are added to things like electricity, steel, concrete and fertilizers, where emissions arise from their production.

"Agriculture must be recognized for the existing efforts made to reduce greenhouse gas emissions through carbon sequestration with no-till practices, feeding regimes for ruminants, and fertilizer management. Ontario farmers could see future opportunities in carbon credits, offsetting emissions from other companies producing greenhouse gases....

"Farmers need to be consulted and engaged to reach transparency and equity."

If this government truly wants to take action on climate change, they should be looking to those who depend on the earth for their livelihoods for solutions. They must recognize the efforts that Ontario farmers have made to be good stewards of the land and allow them to work with businesses to offset their carbon emissions. This is especially important when you consider the benefits that their efforts are bringing to our economy.

According to the Ontario Federation of Agriculture, in the greater Golden Horseshoe area alone, the industry supplies \$1.6 billion in environmental benefits per year, including absorption of carbon pollution, water filtration, protection against erosion, and runoff control. If this government isn't already looking into opportunities that the agricultural community can afford industry in offsetting carbon emissions with figures like these, they need to consult more.

Another issue with this proposed legislation is the government's underdeveloped plan to accredit offsets. Offset credits are intended to give emitters an opportunity to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. The government has offered little explanation about how it intends on structuring the allocation of offsets.

I'm very concerned about this whole Bill 172. It's just a reason to set up and support the Liberal slush fund.

After all, it doesn't make business sense to promote green initiatives if the government might only credit them in the future.

And, as always, there is the question of cost. What will be the costs associated with the regulation of offsets and of the cap-and-trade scheme more broadly? Will the government need to train new employees? Will businesses have to cut jobs to hire someone familiar with this complicated system? How will the government find the financial resources to train or hire qualified employees? The government has yet to answer any of these questions. This lack of transparency will only serve to diminish investor confidence in Ontario.

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

Mr. Peter Tabuns: I want to thank the member from Huron–Bruce for her extensive speech on this matter and her canvassing of a wide variety of issues.

Hon. James J. Bradley: Do you agree with any of it?

Mr. Peter Tabuns: I have to say that there are a number of things that I disagree with with regard to the member's commentary. I also have to say—and don't think less of me, Speaker—that I agree with some of what she has to say. Occasionally, I agree with the Liberals. Don't think less of me for that. That's just the way life is sometimes.

I think that the member from Huron–Bruce was correct in saying that the bulk of the reductions that are needed in Ontario with regard to action on climate change will come from investment in energy efficiency; on dealing with sprawl; investing in transit; and making investments in, and drawing products from, innovative activities.

Where I disagree with the member—I'll start with the line of argument she was using about the small percentage of global emissions that come from Canada and from Ontario. That is an argument that can be used, frankly, around the world to take no action. If you're operating a factory in Shenzhen, China, you could say, "My factory's small; its total impact on the world is vanishingly small. We shouldn't be taking any action."

If you go past a polluted stream and you throw in a bucket of paint, that bucket of paint is not going to change that stream; it's still polluted, but it is wrong to throw in that bucket of paint. Our contribution may be small compared to the world as a whole, but each small contribution changes the world's climate and threatens the stability of our society and our environment.

I was a bit confused by the member saying that cap-and-trade was a market mechanism and was command and control. I think you've got to pick one of those.

There will be other comments as time goes on.

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

Mr. Arthur Potts: I'm delighted for this opportunity to respond to the member from Huron–Bruce—a wonderful community up there. I get up there often. I used to fly-fish the Maitland River when I had time—and Benmiller Inn. It's a beautiful part of the country. I

appreciate very much the extensive analysis she has done on the bill. I know that's her role as the critic for the party, and it's very important to have heard some of the materials coming from her.

I particularly want to focus on what I thought I was hearing early in her speech, which was a bit on the Conservative plan. I remember her saying, "The Conservative plan is"—and as I went to get a piece of paper to start writing it down, that was the end of it. I'll have to go back to Hansard tomorrow, maybe just to review what the Conservative plan is because it was so very, very short and sweet. We are hoping to get more details on what they think they would do that was somewhat different, as they're certainly not in that speech I got from the critic today.

I want to focus a little bit on this concept of her concern about fraud and how it may be identified in other markets in Europe particularly, the early adopters of cap-and-trade systems. The world has learned from mistakes that were made in how to set up the proper initiatives to cover off fraud. We're very clear that, as a result of what we know—and we are setting up very strict oversight rules for the cap-and-trade market that will guard against fraudulent behaviour. We're working very closely with the Western Climate Initiative, an agency that helps to monitor and put the systems in place; that is consistent with what they're doing in California, which is consistent with what they're doing in Quebec. It's extraordinarily important that we recognize that. I agree with the member from Toronto–Danforth. This whole notion that we are only a small piece of the puzzle, that we shouldn't do anything but throw our hands up in the air, and we have to understand that we think globally but we act locally, and every individual can do their part and by doing their part send a signal to the neighbour, the people down the street and the country next door to do their part—it's absolutely critical that we not use a *de minimis* argument like: We're only a little part of the problem; therefore, we should do nothing.

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

Mr. Rick Nicholls: It's a pleasure to stand in this House and actually speak to Bill 172, the Climate Change Mitigation and Low-carbon Economy Act.

First of all, I want to commend our critic from Huron–Bruce. She takes her role as our critic for the environment and climate change very, very seriously. She researches, she delves into things, and she's got backbone, and that's one of the things I truly appreciate about her efforts in our caucus. When we talk about proper consultation—I was touching base with her earlier, and I asked, "So, how much consultation has the government done on this?" She told me: "Listen, do you know what? They don't listen to the recommendations and the consultations. They just have their minds set, and that's the way they want to go."

I heard earlier a member's comment about, "Oh, the Conservative plan"—and then stop there. The fact of the matter is: They're the government. They're the ones that

are supposed to be coming up with the ideas, recommendations and suggestions, but they do that by effectively listening to people throughout the province. They're not doing that. They have their minds set, and this is the direction they're going to go. As far as I'm concerned, they just don't have a credible plan to tackle climate change.

One of the other things that I'm kind of concerned about is that they like to throw out what I call shiny objects. They get people chasing shiny objects to distract them or detract from the real message.

The last thing that I want to simply talk about here is the fact that they are requiring natural gas and petroleum industries to purchase all their emission allowances during the first compliance period. That's why the cost of natural gas, gasoline, diesel and propane are going to go up. I'm concerned because Union Gas is in my area, and that's going to affect a big company, a big employer in Chatham-Kent-Essex.

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

Miss Monique Taylor: I'm pleased to have a moment to thank the member from Huron-Bruce for her very intensive report. She is the critic for this portfolio, and as a Conservative, she would put forward their branding and the way that they feel about cap-and-trade.

New Democrats support cap-and-trade, but we find a lot of errors—not errors; a lot of difficulty with the bill and concerns that it would have on the affected people. We need to make sure that the bill is fair, that people can afford their Union Gas bill when it comes into their home, that an increase on them when they are already struggling paycheque-to-paycheque, month-to-month to get those bills paid is difficult. I've heard from a lot of people in my community about the increase of gas at the pump. The prices were just starting to come down. People were starting to be able to breathe a little easier with the price of gasoline, and now there's a 4.3% increase on every litre. It's a huge chunk, again, being put into taxes.

We are also concerned about where these dollars are going to go. It's a lot of money that's going to be going into the provincial coffers. Where is that money going to go? Is it going to be designated completely for climate change and environment? We're not sure, so we're concerned about the fairness and we're concerned about the transparency and where that's going to happen.

I've also read concerns about the Environmental Commissioner being let in on initiatives and what's happening; there are no regulations to make sure that they are being brought in. That's a huge concern. We need to make sure that our Environmental Commissioner is on top of this also.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Huron-Bruce has two minutes.

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: Thank you, Speaker. I appreciate the comments from my colleagues from Toronto-Danforth, Beaches-East York, Chatham-Kent-Essex and Hamilton Mountain. We all have to home in on one thing: We have to do right by the Ontario

taxpayer. No matter what partisan flavours would like to paint us differently, we all want to do our part to protect the environment, but all the while, we can't take Ontarians for granted, because their pockets are becoming lighter and lighter.

I believe, honestly, that Ontarians want to do their part to reduce emissions. Again, Ontario's total global greenhouse gas emission is less than half a percentage point, and in no way should my comments be misconstrued to mean we can't do better. We all can do better because we care about the environment. My point is that less than half a percentage point should not be generating \$1.9 billion in a slush fund for Liberals to use for pet projects, for Liberals to fill their coffers because of their mismanagement and waste. That's what's unacceptable. They are raising \$1.9 billion on the backs of Ontarians, and they're also using their plan for a PR stunt. It's unacceptable.

Ontarians deserve to know the truth. Our party will go forward in an honest matter. We'll listen to our stakeholders, because we need a credible plan. We need to embrace innovation. We need to allow industry to lead the way. Our party doesn't ever want to see industry chased out of the province. In the manner in which this government has set up their cap-and-trade scheme, Ontarians are going to be poorer and we're going to lose more jobs because industry is going to choose to relocate elsewhere. That is an absolute shame.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Thank you.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

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

The House recessed from 1013 to 1030.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Robert Bailey: I'd like to welcome Mr. Lorne Given from the town of Petrolia, joining us in the west members' gallery this morning. Thank you.

Ms. Ann Hoggarth: I would like to welcome to the assembly the parents of page Luke Bentley and two of my constituents from Barrie: Michael Bentley and Michelle Legault.

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: It is my great pleasure to introduce my brother, who is a teacher from the Toronto District School Board. He is with some students today: Klara Billa, Jaelynn Edwards, Claire Melanson, Kayenne Sin-Lu, Aphrodite Szalontay and Cassandra Sukraj.

If I can brag a little bit, my brother's students—their artwork is displayed downstairs in the Legislature here, so they're here to check out their artwork. And, if you'll indulge me, I would also like to wish my brother a happy birthday.

Hon. Helena Jaczek: I'd like to welcome, in the east members' gallery, visiting from Victoria, BC, my high school classmate Maxine Charlesworth and her husband, Derek Reimer.

Hon. Ted McMeekin: I notice in the gallery Rob MacIsaac, the head of Hamilton Health Sciences, with a couple of friends who were here for this morning's breakfast on health research. Welcome.

Ms. Daiene Vernile: Further to that, we did have members of the Council of Academic Hospitals of Ontario visiting us today. I'd like to introduce Karen Mitchell, who is the executive director; Barry McLellan, who is CEO of Sunnybrook; Robert MacIsaac, CEO of Hamilton Health Sciences; and Bernard Leduc, who is CEO of Hôpital Montfort. Thank you very much for visiting us.

Ms. Harinder Malhi: I would like to introduce somebody in the gallery. Jashun is a volunteer in my constituency office. She's also pursuing post-graduate studies in public administration, so she wanted to come and find out what question period was like.

Hon. Bill Mauro: I was also this morning at the breakfast for the Council of Academic Hospitals of Ontario. From Thunder Bay and the Thunder Bay Regional Research Institute this morning, Dr. Reznik and Janet Northan, doing great work at Thunder Bay Regional Health Sciences Centre, creating a knowledge-based economy in northern Ontario. I welcome them to Queen's Park.

ORAL QUESTIONS

ONTARIO DRUG BENEFIT PROGRAM

Mr. Patrick Brown: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Acting Premier. The seniors' advocacy group CARP has said that the government's changes to the seniors' drug benefit will "have a significant negative impact on many seniors." Because of that, I have a simple yes-or-no question. Will the government reverse their plan to nearly double the deductible on seniors paying for their medications: yes or no?

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Deputy Premier?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Thank you, Speaker, and good morning. When it comes to supporting seniors, this budget has a tremendous number of initiatives. I know the Minister of Health is going to want to speak to the specific issue that the Leader of the Opposition has raised, but let's just take a look at some of the things that we are doing to support—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I gave it a short moment to see if it could take care of itself.

Carry on, please.

Hon. Deborah Matthews:—an additional \$250 million to expand capacity in home and community care; \$75 million over three years to expand community-based hospice and palliative care.

Interjections.

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

Hon. Deborah Matthews: We're expanding access to the low-income seniors benefit to 170,000 more seniors.

We're making the shingles vaccine free. We're removing the debt retirement charge, and that saves seniors on average \$70 a year. There are many more.

I look forward to the supplementary.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Patrick Brown: Back to the Acting Premier: I appreciate her talking points on this file, but the reality is that on Monday the leader of the third party raised a valid concern about how this affects seniors, and you brushed it aside. You didn't give it a real answer. The government simply used a smoke-and-mirrors approach to hide the fact that seniors and the care they need and the medications they need are being diminished.

Now the Liberals have actually admitted that maybe they "didn't get it right"; that the change is now "out for consultation." It shouldn't have needed any more consultation. The Liberals ignored the entire pre-budget hearings—the entire process—and they didn't use common sense.

My question is: How out of touch is this government? How out of touch is this Liberal Party when they thought a senior making \$19,500 was rich? This government is clueless.

Interjections.

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

Deputy Premier?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: To the Minister of Health.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: Mr. Speaker, let me go to other aspects of the CARP response to our budget. The leader of the official opposition focused on one comment, and we welcome the comments from CARP. But they also welcomed the Ontario government's recognition of the special needs of those with dementia and other neurological conditions—they congratulated us for those investments—by investing \$10 million in Behavioural Supports Ontario. CARP also welcomes that the shingles vaccine will now be covered for seniors between the ages of 65 and 70, saving them approximately \$170.

But I find it rich coming from the leader of the official opposition, who for nine years was part of a government that—he never stood up for Ontario—decreased the Canada Health Transfer to Ontario. He never represented the needs of the people of this—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Order. The next one will get my attention.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member for Simcoe—Grey; the member for Prince Edward—Hastings.

Final supplementary.

Mr. Patrick Brown: Back to the Acting Premier: Seniors already have a tough time in this province because of what this government has done. This government has cut residency spots when 800,000 Ontarians can't find a family doctor. Seniors can't find a family physician. Now seniors are having a tougher time accessing physiotherapy. This comes because the government cut \$50 million from seniors' physiotherapy. One in 10

seniors already don't fill their prescriptions because of the cost that prohibits it. And now the government has just made medication twice as expensive for so many seniors.

My question is: When will this government stop their attack on Ontario's seniors?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: I don't think anybody's buying that argument, Mr. Speaker.

The reality is that 170,000 more low-income seniors will pay no annual deductible. They'll go from paying \$100 deductible annually to zero dollars. That's 170,000, for a total of almost 500,000. Ontarians are—

Mr. John Yakabuski: And how many seniors are in this province?

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Ninety-two per cent get a hike.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock. I'm not going to be bouncing up and down. The last two rounds were not acceptable, and I'm going to say now that I've been tempted—and I'll leave this for you to decide: Do we move right to warnings or naming? It's got to stop. I want to hear everybody when they're standing.

Minister?

1040

Hon. Eric Hoskins: Mr. Speaker, seniors in Ontario will continue to have the most generous and the lowest out-of-pocket expenses for prescription drugs in all of Canada. On average, the out-of-pocket is \$277 for Ontarians. The next closest province is more than \$600 per senior for their out-of-pocket expenses.

ENERGY POLICIES

Mr. Patrick Brown: My question is for the Acting Premier. Since I can't get a straight answer on cuts to medications for seniors, let's try something else. Ontario's budget is still missing a credible plan to have affordable and competitive energy. The PC caucus had a simple ask: We wanted a plan to have affordable energy in the province of Ontario. The Liberal response was to offer \$2 a month as a rebate. This does nothing for a senior who has an \$800 hydro bill.

Mr. Speaker, is this government, is this Liberal Party embarrassed that their idea of energy relief is giving a toonie to Ontarians who are flooded by your cost because you've made a mess of the energy sector?

Interjections.

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

Deputy Premier.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Of course, we on this side are anxiously awaiting their plan to reduce energy costs, Speaker. That seems to have been missing in action.

You know, the Leader of the Opposition—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): All right. We're moving to warnings, and I'll give them out.

Carry on.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: The Leader of the Opposition called us "clueless." Do you think it's clueless to offer free tuition to kids in low-income families and reduce tuition costs for middle-income families? Do you think that's clueless? Do you think it's clueless to spend \$160 billion on infrastructure? That's 110,000 jobs a year. Do you think that's clueless? Do you think it's clueless to add—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I would not take that chance.

To the Chair, please. Finish.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Speaker, do they think it's clueless to lower parking fees for 900,000 patients and visitors? Do they think it's clueless to fund the shingles vaccine? Do they think it's clueless to invest \$100 million to help homeowners lower their—

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

Supplementary?

Mr. Patrick Brown: Mr. Speaker, back to the Acting Premier: My question was on energy; I'd appreciate an answer on energy.

Not only did this budget do nothing to make energy more affordable; this budget did nothing to rein in the executive salaries at Hydro One that are completely out of touch with the rest of Canada. After this budget, the combined salaries of six hydro executives in four other provinces are still less than the \$4-million gold-plated paycheque you gave the CEO of Hydro One. After this budget, the CEO will still make twice as much as the three highest-paid executives at British Columbia Hydro.

Why didn't this budget rein in the lavish paycheques for your Hydro One execs?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: To the Minister of Energy.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: Speaker, the question is premised on electricity prices and the level of electricity prices. Some of the examples that have been used of large numbers of monthly payments are true bills. They're typically in the rural and northern communities.

In our budget, access to natural gas infrastructure, we acknowledge, is crucial to the long-term economic fortunes of rural and northern Ontario. To mitigate prices, we've got a plan to take natural gas into rural and northern communities. The budget has a \$200-million loan program to expand natural gas. It proposes a \$30-million Natural Gas Economic Development Grant for rural communities.

Mr. Speaker, Union Gas, at the present time, has 11 applications before the Ontario Energy Board to bring natural gas to rural communities.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Prince Edward-Hastings is warned.

Final supplementary.

Mr. Patrick Brown: Mr. Speaker, back to the Acting Premier and the Minister of Energy: What in the world does that have to do with the Hydro One salaries? I'd just appreciate an answer for once in this building. It would

be nice. It would be kind if the government could respond with an answer.

There is no plan for affordable energy. There is no plan to rein in Hydro One CEO salaries. There is no plan to stop the fire sale of Hydro One. This budget does nothing to recoup—

Interjection.

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

Carry on.

Mr. Patrick Brown: This budget does nothing to recoup the billions of dollars you're giving away to our competitors because of your contracts. You're actually giving to our competitors.

The Premier says, "What is the cost of doing nothing?" Well, the cost of doing nothing is that families are paying \$1,000 more a year because of your government. My question is, will you do something? Will you actually do something on the energy sector? Ontarians can't afford these exorbitant—

Interjections.

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

Minister of Energy.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: I've indicated in this House over the last week or two that the average daily price for electricity in—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I'm only going to give you what you want. The member from Simcoe-Grey is warned.

Carry on.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: The average daily residential price in Ontario is \$5. We have taken additional steps for the rural communities. The rural and remote electricity rate protection program is a rate equalization program that benefits rural and remote residential and farm customers, since the cost of distributing power to remote areas is much higher than in the urban areas. The program helps to offset the higher costs of providing service to customers in those areas.

Hydro One has also launched a conservation program of heat pumps. They subsidize the costs, which will lower costs in rural areas by \$800 to \$1,500 a year.

We're taking action. We're acknowledging the challenge in the rural and remote areas, and we're—

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

New question.

ONTARIO DRUG BENEFIT PROGRAM

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: My question is to the Deputy Premier. Telling a senior living on \$19,500 that the cost of their medication is going to double overnight is wrong.

Now the Premier says she's open to changing her plan to nearly double prescription costs for most seniors. Being open is a good thing, but being open to a change and actually making that change are very different things.

Let's be clear: Will the Liberal government commit to changing their plan today?

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

Hon. Eric Hoskins: The Premier has been clear that we will be sure to get this right for all seniors. We're bringing 170,000 of the lowest-income seniors into a situation where they go from \$100 deductible each year to zero dollars deductible. I hope that's something, even though they haven't referenced or mentioned it, that even the NDP can support.

The Premier was also absolutely clear, as we put this forward for discussion and consultation, that there will be regulations required and that we'll be sure to get it right. If changes need to be made, we'll make those changes.

But it's important, and I plead for the third party to at least acknowledge the added value, the important impact that this is going to have, for the poorest of the poor, that they used to care about. The 170,000 new individuals—that will be almost half a million seniors—

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

Supplementary?

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: The seniors of this province are pleading with this government not to increase their drug costs. You don't need a panel of experts to tell you that forcing seniors living on \$19,500 to pay nearly twice as much for their medication is the wrong decision.

The Premier says she agrees but she needs a consultation. Does the Liberal government really need a consultation to tell them that it's not fair to make struggling seniors pay even more for their medication?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: Let's look at some of the comparisons across the country, and what this province has done for our seniors when it comes to out-of-pocket drug costs.

In Ontario, it's \$277. That's the average cost to a senior for the out-of-pocket prescription drug costs, apart from what the government provides for them. If we go to the province furthest west, in British Columbia, \$615 is the average annual out-of-pocket cost for our seniors. Alberta is \$613—an NDP government. Saskatchewan is \$884 for the annual out-of-pocket expenses. Manitoba is \$982. Quebec is \$698. Here in Ontario, the average out-of-pocket cost for a senior—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Timmins-James Bay is warned.

You have a 10-second wrap-up.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: We have the most generous prescription drug program in the entire country for seniors. There's no other province that comes even close. The next province—

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

Interjections.

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

Final supplementary.

1050

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: Thursday's budget gave Ontario seniors a shock. For most of them, their drug costs are

going to nearly double this summer. For seniors living on a fixed income, this creates chaos. For a struggling senior, these costs could mean the difference between paying for rent or paying for their heating bill.

The Premier says she's consulting and that she's open to changes, but she won't say for sure if she's actually willing to make those changes at the end of the day, and these are still costs that are going to seriously affect seniors.

Will the Liberal government be clear today that they're fixing the Premier's mistakes and tell Ontarians that they'll see a new plan that will not attack seniors?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: I am surprised, because at one moment, the member of the third party said that we need to consult more, and now he's suggesting that we not consult with seniors, that we not consult with their advocacy groups, that we not consult with Ontarians to make sure that we've got this absolutely right and that it works for all seniors.

I think that most seniors would agree that bringing 170,000 of the lowest-income seniors into that range where they pay absolutely no annual deductible is a good thing. We want to make sure that we've got it right for all seniors, and frankly, I think that the old NDP would have supported this. The new NDP, unfortunately, doesn't want consultations. They don't appreciate the 170,000 who no longer have to pay any annual deductible.

ONTARIO BUDGET

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: The next question, again, is to the Deputy Premier. The Premier's plan to double the costs of medication for seniors was a mistake. It's a good thing that the Premier acknowledges that was a mistake and is working towards correcting it.

But we're hearing the government is also quietly making some changes to the tuition plan, saying it was their plan all along to tie grants to increasing tuitions, as well as to inflation.

What other mistakes does the Liberal government see in their budget and which of these mistakes will they be correcting?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I look up at the gallery, I look at the kids who join us in the Legislature every day, and we have an important message for those kids now that we could not give those kids before this budget. The message we can give kids now is that your job is to work hard, get the marks and get admitted into post-secondary education. You no longer need to worry about the financial barriers—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): My operation in terms of this chair applies to everybody.

Finish, please.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: This change is absolutely transformational. It tears down a barrier that kids in low-income families and kids in moderate-income families have faced since the beginning of post-secondary education, and that is the financial barrier. Kids now can

succeed based on their willingness to work hard. We will make sure that money will never, ever stand in the way of students achieving their full potential.

Interjections.

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

Supplementary?

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: Selling Hydro One is also a mistake; everyone knows it. Given that the Premier says that she may fix her mistake on the seniors' drug costs, will the Liberal government commit to correcting this mistake and not sell off our public asset?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: The old NDP would have been applauding this budget. This budget contains investments that the old NDP would have been standing up and saying, "Well done. This reflects our values." Whether it's more investments in hospice and palliative care, whether it's removing the financial barrier for post-secondary education, whether it's investing in hospices and—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Windsor–Tecumseh is warned.

Carry on.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: We're proud of this budget. We think we've made the right investments that will improve the lives of people in this province. It's a budget that creates jobs. It's a budget that demonstrates strong fiscal management. We've worked hard to arrive at this, and overwhelmingly, people are saying, "You're making changes we never thought you'd be able to make."

Speaker, the NDP should get on board with us and support this budget.

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

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: I know that some of the old Liberals in this House remember when they spoke against the privatization of Hydro One—an interesting point you raise.

Let me tell you why, Mr. Speaker, this budget is so horrible and why the NDP will proudly vote against it: It's a mistake to slash \$430 million from education; it's a mistake to slash \$50 million from post-secondary and training; it's a mistake to slash \$1.2 billion from about everything else; and it's a mistake not to cap tuition fees.

This budget is a colossal mistake. Will the Liberal government admit that their budget is full of mistakes and commit to addressing those mistakes today?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Speaker, this budget makes some really important investments that are no mistakes at all. Are you saying it's a mistake to increase funding for autism—

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

Hon. Deborah Matthews: —by \$355 million, Speaker? Are you saying it's a mistake to build 20 more hospices and support that community care? Are you saying it's a mistake—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I'm sorry. Third person; to the Chair. Thank you.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: It's astonishing to me that they think it's a mistake to remove the financial barrier to post-secondary education. You would think, Speaker, that that would have been a core value of the NDP. On that item alone, they should be applauding this budget. It's very disappointing that they have sunk into partisanship to attack this budget, which is a superb budget.

Interjections.

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

New question.

GOODWILL INDUSTRIES

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: My question is for the Minister of Community and Social Services of this old Liberal government. The bankruptcy of Goodwill Toronto is leaving hundreds out of work. Many wonder if they will ever see the severance pay owed to them. Yet last year, the government doled out \$4 million to Goodwill, including nearly \$1.7 million from MCSS. What do they have to show for it, besides the \$230,000 CEO salary? That money, like the millions and millions blown in the SAMS fiasco, is gone—gone, with zero accountability and no consequences.

My question is this: Does it surprise the minister to know that, as far as taxpayers are concerned, the Liberals have abused all of their goodwill?

Hon. Helena Jaczek: Of course, we, on this side of the House, take employment supports for those with disabilities extremely seriously. So, of course, we were shocked when we all read about what happened at Goodwill Toronto.

I'd like to tell the member opposite that, since then, we have reached out to every one of our clients served by Goodwill to determine how best to support each individual and minimize disruption. We have now made sure that many of these individuals have new employment supports because, of course, our ministry provided funding to Goodwill to support individuals with a disability, including developmental disabilities, to find employment in their communities locally.

I will, in the supplementary, give a little more detail in terms of our funding arrangement with Goodwill.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: I hope this minister is listening to people who tell her what is really going on. Media quoted Goodwill insiders who said that MCSS funding was improperly diverted, leaving disabled clients without proper staff or resources. Executives, according to the Toronto Sun report, expensed things like car washes "with no apparent checks and balances," and staff didn't get the training they needed.

The minister needs to tell us why she rewarded such dysfunction with millions of dollars. Why didn't the minister hold this CEO accountable? Why did the minister treat the CEO with the same kid gloves they used with Chris Mazza at Ornge?

Hon. Helena Jaczek: Of course, Goodwill's funding was provided on a monthly basis. As soon as the ministry became aware of the program closure, all payments were stopped. We will be working through the bankruptcy process to recover any funds owed to the ministry. Of course, our focus at this time is to help our clients transition.

I can assure the member opposite that any unused funds will be returned throughout this process. Our ministry does ensure that an agency is always in compliance. We looked very closely at the 2014-15 commitments and we discovered at that time, through our very detailed transfer payment process, that the agency was in compliance, and I want to assure the member that we will be diligent in recovering any unused funds.

1100

JOB CREATION

Ms. Catherine Fife: My question is to the Minister of Finance. Last week, the government introduced its 2016 budget: fewer jobs for today and tomorrow. That's a fair statement. The government has admitted, in black and white, that job projections are down by 60,000, and according to the Financial Accountability Officer, Ontario's total employment for 2015 matched the weakest annual job gains since the recession.

Minister, this question is for the Ontarians who have left the job market discouraged, for the Ontarians who are struggling to find work, and for the Ontarians who are about to begin their careers. Where is this government's job creation strategy?

Hon. Charles Sousa: I'm going to allow my colleague to do the supplementary. Let's be clear: Ontario and Ontarians—the people of Ontario, the businesses of Ontario—because of the work we've done to stimulate economic growth and partner with business, have created over 608,000 net new jobs since the recession.

Furthermore, we're aiming to add 320,000 more new jobs over the next 36 months, bringing us to over 900,000 net new jobs. In the last eight weeks, we've added 50,000 new jobs, outpacing all of Canada. Our growth has outpaced the United States in percentage growth as well. We're proud of Ontarians. We support the people of Ontario, as should the NDP.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Catherine Fife: New Democrats believe that Ontarians deserve a secure job that can actually support a family, but this budget fails miserably on job creation. This budget doesn't address, for example, the fact that so many Ontarians across this province are working multiple jobs just to make ends meet. It also doesn't talk about the fact that, for nearly two years straight, Windsor has remained among the top two cities with the highest unemployment rate in the country. It has also conveniently left out the fact that for 144 months straight, Ontario's youth unemployment rate has beat the national number. That is not a record to be proud of.

Minister, what's this government's response to the thousands of Ontarians that it has clearly left behind?

Hon. Charles Sousa: Minister of Economic Development, Employment and Infrastructure.

Hon. Brad Duguid: Mr. Speaker, anybody listening to that rhetoric has got to wonder what the NDP is looking at when it comes to the health of our economy. They've got to wonder what economists they're consulting when they say that we're not gaining in jobs. The finance minister is absolutely right: 608,300 net new jobs since the global recession. That's only number one in the country. It's one of the leading jurisdictions in the industrialized world when it comes to job creation.

How many of those jobs are full-time? How about: 100% of those jobs are full-time. How many of those jobs are higher-income jobs? How about 75% of those jobs being in sectors that are higher income?

Let's stick to the facts: We're creating jobs; we're creating good jobs. We're creating jobs right across this province.

SOCIAL ASSISTANCE

Mr. Granville Anderson: My question is to the Minister of Community and Social Services. As the minister knows, Ontario's social assistance programs are critical to our poverty reduction goals to support the most vulnerable members of our society. Maintaining an effective social safety net is one part of our government's broader effort to reduce poverty and ensure that we have an inclusive society and economy.

I have heard from single mothers in Bowmanville who struggle with child support and feel that they need more assistance. They have told me that the system can be complex to navigate for those who need it. In last week's budget, our government announced an income security reform process. Could the minister tell me more about her ministry's work to reform the income security system for vulnerable Ontarians?

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Minister of Community and Social Services.

Hon. Helena Jaczek: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and to the member from Durham for that question.

Part of my mandate as Minister of Community and Social Services is to reform social assistance. Over the past year, my ministry has had ongoing discussions with stakeholders, experts and those on the front line. They told us that it's important to expand reform to include aspects of the wider income security system. We listened, and we will be engaging stakeholders in the coming year to develop an action plan for more comprehensive reform.

The plan will be informed by client experiences and a basic income pilot project, among other things. We will also engage with First Nations, Inuit and Métis nations to ensure we have had an inclusive process.

As we develop this action plan, we will continue to take important immediate steps to improve income security, such as ending the full clawback of child support from social assistance.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Granville Anderson: Thank you to the minister for sharing information about this important plan to improve our income security system for vulnerable Ontarians. It is vital that we reduce barriers to ensure we have a fair, adequate and accessible income security system that is simpler for Ontarians who are facing challenges in their lives.

We know that some of those Ontarians facing challenges are single parents and their children who receive social assistance. Families in Courtice and Port Perry have come to my office concerned about what is available to them and what we are going to do for them. The minister just mentioned ending the clawback of child support for social assistance recipients. Could the minister please share more information with me and my constituents about this important challenge to social assistance?

Hon. Helena Jaczek: We know that children in single-parent families are disproportionately and more profoundly affected by poverty. As part of our government's commitment to combating child poverty, as outlined in our 2016 budget, my ministry will be ending the full clawback of child support for social assistance recipients. Currently, families receiving child support have their social assistance benefit reduced by the full amount of child support they receive. This means that families on social assistance are no better off when they receive child support, and the parent responsible for making payments may feel little incentive to pay.

We would like to see a full exemption of child support for social assistance recipients, but it is important that we get the opinions we need on how best to solve the problem here in Ontario. What we know is that families who receive child support will see a positive change by this time next year.

HUMAN TRAFFICKING

Ms. Laurie Scott: My question is for the Acting Premier. In last week's budget, the only mention of human trafficking was the reannouncement of funding to address violence against indigenous women, an effort that is long overdue. But there is no new funding for more dedicated officers to investigate human trafficking, no new funding for dedicated crown attorneys to prosecute this disgusting crime, and no new funding for victims' services within that massive \$134-billion budget.

This government says human trafficking is a crisis. This government says that combatting this crime is a priority. This crime is stealing the innocence of our young women. Mr. Speaker, why is this government forcing the girl next door to continue to live in this nightmare?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Minister responsible for women's issues.

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: I want to thank the member from Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock, a colleague in Durham region with me, for raising this important topic

again. I want to also thank her for her work on the select committee on violence and harassment against women. I was very pleased that she was supportive of our Walking Together strategy that the Premier and I announced last week, a \$100-million investment to end violence against aboriginal women and girls.

But she's absolutely right: That's only part of the story. Human trafficking is a serious issue. It's a significant priority for our government. That's why the Premier asked the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services and I to spearhead additional work in human trafficking to build on the investments we've already made, and to bring that strategy forward this June.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Laurie Scott: The Liberal government didn't address human trafficking enough in their budget. They didn't put it in Bill 132. How much longer do these victims and survivors have to wait?

We've learned from the experts that a trafficker can make over \$250,000 in a year from one victim. That's roughly \$5,000 a week from a single person. During the time that a trafficker makes \$5,000 in one week from one victim, this government has invested zero to combat this deplorable crime.

The Premier admitted that driving up drug costs for seniors was a mistake, so will the government admit that they got this one wrong and redirect resources to combat human trafficking today?

1110

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: We are actually continuing to invest in dealing with this despicable topic of human trafficking. We will invest over \$9 million over the next three years in our language interpreter program services. We provided \$225,000 in funding to the White Ribbon Campaign to develop and promote resources that engage young men in ending human trafficking. I could go on and on about a number of investments across ministries beyond my Ontario Women's Directorate.

We fund a victim's helpline service through, I believe, community services and corrections. We have provided additional money to help young people in shelters be aware of human trafficking conditions and to try to prevent that. We have more money for sexual violence programs across the province, and we'll continue to work with all the stakeholders in bringing forward a more robust human trafficking strategy—

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

RING OF FIRE

Mr. Michael Mantha: My question is to the Acting Premier. For over eight years, we have heard this government say that the Ring of Fire is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity. Year after year, we hear them make big promises; all have come back empty. This government, which claims to be committed to this project, continues to stand by and watch all companies leave and halt operations.

My question is, when they say "once in a lifetime," whose lifetime are you talking about?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: The Minister of Aboriginal Affairs.

Hon. David Zimmer: I'm happy to respond to this question. For several years, our government has been laying the groundwork to drive smart, sustainable and collaborative development in the region of the Ring of Fire. We realize the full potential of the Ring of Fire, but it is an extremely complex undertaking that all parties have to be involved in.

We're supporting sustainable development in the Ring of Fire. Significant progress has been made. To date, our government has established a Ring of Fire Infrastructure Development Corp. We've made a \$1-billion commitment to develop transportation infrastructure in the region, and it was recently reiterated in our budget. We have reached a historic regional framework agreement with the Matawa First Nations that lays—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): We were doing quite well, but it's never too late to get another warning or, for those that have gotten warnings, to get named. I'm not playing and it's not a roll of the dice. I'll do what I need to do if you don't.

Finish, please.

Hon. David Zimmer: The regional framework agreement lays the groundwork for future discussions with the Matawa First Nations. And just this past spring, we announced a joint investment with the federal government of more than—

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

Mr. Michael Mantha: Once again to the Acting Premier: Once again, we hear this government reannounce an old 2014 promise to invest \$1 billion in the Ring of Fire. It's clear that this is a copy-and-paste budget. This government continues to dangle this \$1-billion announcement over the heads of industry, northerners and First Nations without actually saying when it will give it. This project is dependent on transportation, infrastructure, electricity prices, environmental guidelines and leadership by this government, but they have failed on all accounts.

My question is: Will this government give a definite answer on when they will make good on this commitment, or will they wait to reannounce it again at campaign time?

Hon. David Zimmer: As I said before, we've invested \$785,000 to enable the Ring of Fire nations to complete a community service corridor study. That's one of the first steps to establishing a transportation corridor. Just this past June, the Minister of the Environment and Climate Change approved various amendments with respect to terms of reference for the environmental assessment for Noront's Eagle's Nest project in the Ring of Fire.

We are serious about moving forward with the Ring of Fire. The PC party has not been engaged in this issue. The

former federal PC party was not engaged in this issue. When Ontario put up \$1 billion for the road corridor, the federal government ponied up a measly \$23 million. The Leader of the Opposition was a member of that party—

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

Interjections.

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

ABORIGINAL AFFAIRS

Ms. Indira Naidoo-Harris: My question is for the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs. Ontario is home to a large, important indigenous population, but as we all know, this vital community faces many challenges and needs our support. That's why—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Look, this is going both sides. When somebody asks a question here, I'm hearing heckling from the same side that's asking the question, and I'm hearing heckling from the same side as the person asking the question and giving the answer. Please.

Finish, please.

Ms. Indira Naidoo-Harris: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

That's why, in our 2016 Ontario budget our government announced significant investments in important initiatives for First Nations, Métis and Inuit people in Ontario to support these communities. In fact, the Premier also announced a bold new strategy to end violence against aboriginal women before heading to the National Roundtable on Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women.

Can the minister please elaborate on these important announcements and their significance?

Hon. David Zimmer: This budget was a good-news budget for our First Nation communities. We have committed ourselves in this budget to a positive, collaborative relationship with Ontario First Nations.

Here are some of the things that we've done in the budget: The 2016 budget invests \$100 million over three years to fund a long-term strategy to end violence against indigenous women. The budget also provides another \$97 million to improve access to very high-quality, post-secondary education and training opportunities; \$5 million of this investment is for post-secondary education and training at the province's nine aboriginal institutes. There's a further \$13 million for First Nation green energy projects specifically aimed at eliminating the evil of diesel in our northern remote communities.

This is good news for First Nations. This is evidence of our commitment—

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

Supplementary?

Ms. Indira Naidoo-Harris: I'm glad to hear that the minister is working hard for Ontario's indigenous peoples, and I thank him for his tireless efforts. Our government is taking significant steps to improve outcomes

for indigenous people in this province, and I'm proud to be a part of that.

Last week, Minister Zimmer, Minister MacCharles and the Premier were in Winnipeg for the second National Roundtable on Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women. Statistics show that in Ontario, indigenous women are three times more likely to experience violence than other women, and they are three times more likely to be murdered. This is unacceptable. The numbers are troubling, and they need to change. That's why the Premier recently announced our strategy to end violence against indigenous women and mandatory indigenous cultural competency training for the Ontario public service.

Can the minister please tell us more about what the budget does for indigenous peoples?

Hon. David Zimmer: The budget provides \$100 million to develop a strategy against violence against aboriginal women and girls. I was with the Premier and Minister MacCharles in Winnipeg on Thursday and Friday. Ontario, in front of our other provincial colleagues—and the federal minister was there and the Premier of Manitoba. We presented our Ontario strategy, Walking Together. It was discussed at length at the meeting on Friday. It was incredibly well received by our provincial counterparts and the federal government.

There is much detail in this document. The document is entitled Walking Together: Ontario's Long-Term Strategy to End Violence Against Indigenous Women. It was very well received. Ontario has exercised a leadership role, the Premier has exercised a leadership role, and all of the other provinces and the federal government have recognized—

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

New question.

SERVICEONTARIO

Mr. Jim McDonnell: To the Minister of Government and Consumer Services: In your budget, you plan to bring a digital-by-default philosophy to ServiceOntario and raise service fees, but the uptake in digital services by Ontarians hasn't progressed between 2012 and 2015, staying flat at 30%. We know where this leads: higher fees for everyone and an additional cost and inconvenience for constituents such as seniors, disabled Ontarians, Ontarians on fixed incomes, or those who don't have the knowledge, the confidence or the ability to operate a computer.

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Will the minister commit to ensuring that seniors, disabled Ontarians, those on social assistance and other Ontarians who need to visit a counter in person will be able to access quality, courteous, timely and helpful service without a cost penalty?

Hon. David Orzietti: I certainly appreciate the question from the member opposite. ServiceOntario is committed to the highest-quality standards of service for Ontarians, and has been for many, many years. As you

know, the average wait time is less than 15 minutes at ServiceOntario, and the number of services that we are continuing to provide online continues to be expanded while we continue to protect front-counter services. We have approximately 300 locations across the province. We continue to build the platform to make it easier and more timely for people to access services.

In the budget, we committed to transforming the health application for health cards. You'll be able to renew your health card online through ServiceOntario moving forward. We think that's great news for Ontarians. We're going to continue to make services more accessible for Ontarians as we continue to move forward.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Jim McDonell: Back to the minister: Your government is making everything more expensive—driving, camping, fishing, hunting, heating, filling prescriptions, charities, and even dying, with your new estate taxes. If it exists, you bilk Ontarians for it. The government's record is of higher prices for everything and less access to services to show for it.

Why does this government insist on making life more inconvenient and more expensive for all Ontarians, especially those like seniors, the disabled and the poor—those who can least afford it?

Hon. David Oraziotti: The member is being a bit selective here in his questioning. I think when you talk about eliminating things like Drive Clean and free shingles vaccines and whatnot, there are a number of initiatives in the budget that are helping to support consumers across the province.

We continue to build a strong platform at ServiceOntario for accessibility and affordability. ServiceOntario delivers 88 services across 10 lines of businesses. All of the policies that are developed come from other ministries as well. ServiceOntario provides those services based on the policies through a variety of ministries.

The member needs to understand that the services that we continue to provide, we do so in a timely way and in an efficient way, putting more services online, making them more accessible and continuing to make it more convenient and more affordable, quite frankly, for all Ontarians to access services in our ministry.

GO TRANSIT

Mr. Wayne Gates: My question today is to the Minister of Transportation. The 2016 budget mentioned GO to Niagara. Like everyone in the Niagara region, I was happy—

Interjections.

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

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): You won't know. Thank you.

Member?

Mr. Wayne Gates: I was happy to see that. This project is extremely important for the people of my riding and all of Niagara. This was a positive step forward and

highlights the hard work that the local mayors, councillors, regional chair and the member for St. Catharines have done to put Niagara GO on the radar of our government.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock. I think there are ways in which we can continue now.

Please finish.

Mr. Wayne Gates: The expansion of GO train service to Niagara is not about scoring political points. Unfortunately, without firm commitments to a timeline, the people of Niagara still cannot be sure when expanded GO service will come to Niagara Falls.

Minister, does your government have a time frame for expanding GO train service all the way to Niagara Falls?

Hon. Steven Del Duca: I want to begin by thanking the member from Niagara Falls for the question. I know that he has already said it, but I think it does bear repeating because it's important to recognize that not just over the last few months, not just over the last couple of years, but throughout his entire career here in this chamber, the member from St. Catharines has been a consistent advocate for more for Niagara region. Specifically, he's been a staunch champion to extend GO train service down to Niagara region.

Applause.

Hon. Steven Del Duca: I believe that member deserves a very vigorous round of applause for his continued advocacy.

Speaker, the member from Niagara Falls is 100% right in mentioning that on page 71, in fact, of Ontario budget 2016, we say specifically, "Subject to agreement with freight rail partners," we will see "two-way, all-day rail services on the Kitchener and Milton GO corridors, and extension of GO rail service" to both Niagara and Bowmanville.

I would say to the member opposite that the Ministry of Transportation and Metrolinx will continue to work with the municipalities—

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

Supplementary?

Mr. Wayne Gates: For more than two years, I have talked about the importance of expanding GO to Niagara. The Premier herself called it one of her "top priorities" nearly two years ago.

This is important: Expansion of GO train service would have a positive economic impact of \$195 million for Niagara and create 2,400 new full-time jobs in Niagara resulting from transit operations, and 1,200 much-needed additional full-time construction jobs to implement daily GO service.

Without a firm timeline, the municipalities of Niagara region, which are all united behind this project, cannot make plans to take full advantage of the economic benefits GO service expansion will provide. Will you commit today to a timeline for two-way, all-day GO to Niagara Falls? I've already read the budget. Can you commit to the time frame today?

Hon. Steven Del Duca: Again, I thank the member from Niagara Falls for the question. I certainly look forward to continuing to work with the member from St. Catharines and with all of the municipalities to make sure that we go forward, that we negotiate, that we do the deal that is required in order to make this extension a reality. That's a commitment I'm happy to give that member and every member in this Legislature as it relates to all of the transportation items that are contained in Ontario budget 2016.

I think what's probably most important, if I could be helpful and provide some advice to my friend across the way as he and his colleagues consider budget 2016 in the coming days and weeks: I sincerely hope, because I know he's a champion for Niagara Falls, that he will encourage his leader and his caucus colleagues to support Ontario budget 2016 so that we can deliver on its full promise for the people of Ontario.

ONTARIO RETIREMENT PENSION PLAN

Ms. Eleanor McMahon: My question is to the Associate Minister of Finance. Minister, I was pleased to see the budget reaffirm our government's commitment to enhancing retirement security. I know that residents in my riding of Burlington are pleased to see our government taking a leadership role on this issue.

In fact, together with the minister, just last year we hosted a round table in Burlington on the ORPP with local businesses and social planning groups, and, because we are a young Liberal government that is investing in the future of our young people, they were there too. Why is that? Because they care about their future and they are concerned about it.

People in my riding and beyond know how hard it is to save for retirement. They know the world of work is changing and they understand that a number of young workers no longer have access to a workplace pension plan. They want to know that their children and grandchildren will be able to retire with dignity and financial security.

Mr. Speaker, I know the minister has been made a lot of progress in the development of the plan in the past several months. Minister, can you please highlight some of the milestones that the government has achieved on the ORPP?

Hon. Mitzie Hunter: I want to really thank the fantastic member from Burlington for her hard work on this particular issue in her community. We have made significant progress in our commitment to build a strong and secure retirement income system for the people of Ontario. Our goal is for all Ontario employees to be part of the ORPP or a comparable plan by 2020.

Our government passed the Ontario Retirement Pension Plan Act, 2015, and the Ontario Retirement Pension Plan Administration Corporation Act, 2015. These pieces of legislation lay the foundation for the ORPP and establish the ORPP AC, the arm's-length entity that will administer the plan for the benefit of plan members.

Last fall, we appointed the initial board of directors who will be responsible for the ORPP AC: Susan Wolburgh Jenah, who will serve as chair, Murray Gold and Richard Nesbitt, all bringing unique expertise to the ORPP AC and who will work towards its implementation.

1130

We've also completed our plan design for a contemporary mobile workforce, like the people who live in your community of Burlington.

We're taking important steps forward to ensure that Ontarians can retire with dignity. We want to ensure that future retirees have an opportunity to have a predictable stream of income for life when they retire.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Eleanor McMahon: Thank you to the minister for her response. My constituents will be pleased to hear about the great work under way to enhance retirement security across Ontario. They will be particularly pleased to hear about the experience and expertise of the initial board of directors. Indeed, we are truly fortunate to have such accomplished individuals overseeing the plan's administration on behalf of all Ontarians.

Mr. Speaker, again through you to the minister: I know that last year the minister travelled across the province to get input from business and employees on the plan design details. I understand that, earlier this year, our government finalized the plan's design. I know residents and business owners in my riding are keen to know more about these policy decisions. Mr. Speaker, can the minister please update this House on the policy decisions that our government has released?

Hon. Mitzie Hunter: Thank you once again to the hard-working member for that question. As the member from Burlington suggests, our government has made important progress on the key design features of the ORPP. Last year, I had an extensive consultation across Ontario, speaking with business, labour, families and individuals in more than 10 communities across the province.

In August 2015, our government announced some of the key design details of the ORPP, including plan comparability, phasing in of contribution rates, staged implementation and setting a minimum earnings threshold. Our plan design was confirmed last month, including but not limited to details about funding policy, survivor benefits and the definition of Ontario employment.

Moving forward, we are working with members of our recently established business implementation advisory group to exchange information and knowledge with the business community as the ORPP is implemented for January 2017, when enrolment—

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

New question.

MUNICIPAL FINANCES

Mr. Robert Bailey: My question is to the Acting Premier. The township of Frontenac Islands opened their annual OPP policing bill this year to find out that it was \$26,000 higher than normal. The OPP told them that it

was because they had to police wind turbines. Under the OPP's new billing model, municipalities are now being charged a base service cost for wind turbine property. How does the Deputy Premier expect municipalities to bear this cost?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: The Minister of Finance.

Hon. Charles Sousa: I appreciate the question. The member opposite makes reference to some of the challenges that municipalities in rural communities face as a result of a lack of predictable funding. Certainly, our government recognizes that. It's why we have increased more funding for those communities. In fact, we tripled our funding for infrastructure and supports from \$100 million to \$300 million.

In regard to some of the assessments, that is ongoing right now, and we're going to be working closely with them as we proceed.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Robert Bailey: Again, back to the Deputy Premier: I know they increased the debt; he did not need to tell us that.

Many municipalities were unaware of this added cost. Now municipalities' hands seem tied because they can't stop the construction of these approved projects. Many of the municipalities were forced to take these turbines and feel disrespected by this Liberal government. They can't afford this added cost for policing. Municipalities that are stuck with the added cost want to know: What is this government going to do about it?

Hon. Charles Sousa: This budget goes a long way to provide more support for those municipalities, unlike the member opposite and his government; they actually downloaded and costed more for those communities. That download provided a tremendous amount of pressure.

Mr. Speaker, what they want is predictable funding. What they need is support. What they need is to ensure that we go forward with the programs that we have for infrastructure. That is very clear in this budget. Many of the municipalities have come back citing how pleased they are by the support that we're giving them in this budget: \$160 billion over the next 12 years to support municipalities like the one he's mentioning. We will be there. We'll do what's necessary to facilitate the infrastructure and, ultimately, the revenue that municipality will generate as a result.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Miss Monique Taylor: My question is to the Minister of Health. Yesterday, in Hamilton, staff and their supporters rallied outside St. Joe's hospital, where it has been announced that 136 jobs, including 61 RNs, will be cut. We know that patients pay the price when front-line staff are cut from hospitals.

I've heard from constituents who are hearing that mental health and addictions programs are being cut—programs that saved lives. It is disgraceful that this government is cutting front-line health care workers when vulnerable people are already being underserved.

Just yesterday, we learned that Hamilton Health Sciences is considering closing a hospital.

I've heard from seniors who are languishing on wait lists for access to care and from patients who are concerned about how long it's taking to get their kids access to specialized care. This government is failing the basics and the fundamentals.

Speaker, when will this minister stop the cuts to health care in Hamilton and across this province?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: The budget of 2016, of course, adds an additional, new \$1 billion to the health care budget, for a total of almost \$52 billion.

There's one issue specifically that I need to address, and that's her comment about the comments in papers in Hamilton that Hamilton Health Sciences is somehow thinking of closing a hospital. Nothing could be further from the truth, Mr. Speaker. There was a consultation and a public discussion about what health care in Hamilton might look like 10 or 20 or 30 years down the road and changes that might be necessary to provide care closer to where people are, close to home, close to where people need those services. We invest in Hamilton Health Sciences. We invest in that—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Member from Hamilton Mountain. There's a vote in about 60 seconds.

ANSWERS TO WRITTEN QUESTIONS

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

Ms. Sylvia Jones: Pursuant to standing order 99(d), I have not received an answer to my question tabled on November 5 to the Ministry of Children and Youth Services. I ask for your assistance in getting that answered.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): For the members—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Can I proceed? You've been good today.

The table is in the process of indicating that, and if that turns out to be the case, I'll defer to the minister or the deputy House leader for a response for you.

On the same point of order?

Hon. James J. Bradley: I'd be glad to look into this matter and have the questions answered expeditiously for the member who has made that request.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I indicated that the table still has to check first to see if it is due, but if it is then we've now taken care of that.

VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member for Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry on a point of order.

Mr. Jim McDonnell: I just want to take this opportunity to welcome a friend and staff member, Marcel Lapierre, from our office, along with his wife, Sue; son Rick; and a friend from Sydney, Australia, Jen Williams. Welcome to Queen's Park.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The Attorney General on a point of order.

L'hon. Madeleine Meilleur: Monsieur le Président, si vous me donnez l'opportunité, j'aimerais présenter le président-directeur général de l'Hôpital Montfort, le D^r Bernard Leduc. L'Hôpital Montfort est mon alma mater.

Le Président (L'hon. Dave Levac): Merci beaucoup. Bienvenue.

The Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport.

Hon. Michael Coteau: I'd like to introduce my friend and a friend of many in the Legislature, Mr. Courtney Betty, in the east gallery today.

DEFERRED VOTES

TIME ALLOCATION

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): We have a deferred vote on the amendment to the motion for allocation of time on Bill 163, An Act to amend the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act, 1997 and the Ministry of Labour Act with respect to posttraumatic stress disorder.

Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1139 to 1144.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): On March 1, Mr. Bradley moved government notice of motion number 62. Mr. Yakabuski then moved that the motion be amended as follows:

“That the second, third and fourth bullets”—

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: Dispense.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Dispense? Dispensed.

We are now dealing with Mr. Yakabuski's amendment to the motion.

All those in favour, please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Albanese, Laura	Fraser, John	Meilleur, Madeleine
Anderson, Granville	Hardeman, Ernie	Milczyn, Peter Z.
Arnott, Ted	Harris, Michael	Miller, Norm
Bailey, Robert	Hillier, Randy	Moridi, Reza
Baker, Yvan	Hoggarth, Ann	Munro, Julia
Ballard, Chris	Hoskins, Eric	Naidoo-Harris, Indira
Barrett, Toby	Hudak, Tim	Nicholls, Rick
Berardinetti, Lorenzo	Hunter, Mitzie	Oraziotti, David
Bradley, James J.	Jaczek, Helena	Pettapiece, Randy
Brown, Patrick	Jones, Sylvia	Potts, Arthur
Chan, Michael	Kiwala, Sophie	Qaadri, Shafiq
Chiarelli, Bob	Lalonde, Marie-France	Rinaldi, Lou
Clark, Steve	Leal, Jeff	Sandals, Liz
Coe, Lorne	MacCharles, Tracy	Scott, Laurie
Colle, Mike	MacLaren, Jack	Sergio, Mario
Coteau, Michael	MacLeod, Lisa	Smith, Todd
Crack, Grant	Malhi, Harinder	Sousa, Charles
Damerla, Dipika	Martins, Cristina	Thompson, Lisa M.
Del Duca, Steven	Martow, Gila	Vernile, Daiene
Delaney, Bob	Matthews, Deborah	Walker, Bill
Dhillon, Vic	Mauro, Bill	Wilson, Jim
Dickson, Joe	McDonnell, Jim	Wong, Soo
Dong, Han	McGarry, Kathryn	Yakabuski, John
Duguid, Brad	McMahon, Eleanor	Yurek, Jeff
Fedeli, Victor	McMeekin, Ted	Zimmer, David
Flynn, Kevin Daniel	McNaughton, Monte	

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

Nays

Armstrong, Teresa J.	Gates, Wayne	Sattler, Peggy
Bisson, Gilles	Gretzky, Lisa	Singh, Jagmeet
Fife, Catherine	Hatfield, Percy	Tabuns, Peter
Forster, Cindy	Mantha, Michael	Taylor, Monique
French, Jennifer K.	Miller, Paul	Vanthof, John

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 77; the nays are 15.

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

Are the members ready to vote on the main motion?

Mr. Bradley has moved government notice of motion number 62. 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, please say “nay.”

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

Interjections: Same vote.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Same vote? Same vote.

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 77; the nays are 15.

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

Motion, as amended, agreed to.

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

The House recessed from 1149 to 1500.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mrs. Kathryn McGarry: It's my absolute pleasure today to introduce my longest friend, Andrea Lloyd, in the members' east gallery. Welcome to Queen's Park.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Welcome.

Ms. Daiene Vernile: I am delighted to introduce my new legislative assistant, Cameron Alderdice, who comes from the Oshawa area. Welcome, Cameron.

Mrs. Kathryn McGarry: I also wanted to introduce Christina Bisanz in the members' east gallery. She's a councillor for—Aurora?

Hon. Helena Jaczek: Newmarket.

Mrs. Kathryn McGarry: Newmarket. I got that right. Thank you. Welcome.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

RENEWABLE ENERGY

Mr. Victor Fedeli: The rising cost of electricity in Ontario continues to be of grave concern in my riding. The township of Calvin recently passed a resolution

supporting the township of Wainfleet in requesting that an RFP for added wind generation there be cancelled.

The leaders in Calvin note that the Auditor General's most recent report showed that Ontario power consumers pay a premium of \$9.2 billion for renewable power, with wind power pricing that is double the prices paid in other jurisdictions. They also note that Ontario continues to generate surplus activity and that wind power is an intermittent source of generation that can't be used to replace dependable generating capacity.

As a result, Calvin township resolves that the province exercise its right in section 4.13(12) of the current LRP/RFP to "cancel the process at any stage and for any reason" and not issue any new wind generation contracts.

They also ask the province to hold off on any further renewable procurement until capacity is needed, and that the IESO review outstanding FIT contracts that haven't achieved "commercial operation" and vigorously enforce FIT contract terms.

Affordable energy may be a fantasy to this government, but it's something Ontarians deserve and expect.

DRIVER LICENCES

Ms. Cindy Forster: I rise today to talk about Roy Dixon, a 79-year-old senior in my riding of Welland, and the many seniors across the province whose lives are being made unnecessarily difficult by this government.

Roy dutifully receives an eye exam with an optometrist once per year. Three months ago, after his last exam, his optometrist reported him to MTO after his test supposedly showed that he was a hazard on the road. MTO suspended his licence.

Roy is a fixed-income senior. He paid \$100 for a second opinion from an ophthalmologist who cleared his vision. But before reinstating his licence, he had to do not only a formal driving evaluation but, worse, pay \$675 to do it.

To be clear, Roy was forced to pay \$800 in fees to occupational therapists and ophthalmologists to disprove the initial assessment and to try to get his licence back after almost a year without it. Roy deserves better; Ontario seniors deserve better.

It's unacceptable for us to be making life unnecessarily difficult for our seniors, forcing them to pay hundreds of dollars to prove what a medical professional had already confirmed. I urge all members of this House to give our seniors the respect they deserve and to stop their unfair gouging and unnecessary red tape.

GOVERNMENT AND COMMUNITY SERVICES FAIR

Mr. Yvan Baker: Today I rise to say thank you to a group of people and organizations that are making a difference in my community of Etobicoke Centre. Every day as MPPs, we hear from constituents who need our help. Sometimes we or our staff can assist them, but often we connect them with government agencies or

community organizations that can offer them the support that they need.

Community agencies are often run and funded by volunteers, and they provide assistance daily to all of our constituents, including my own, and they are fundamental to the quality of life in Etobicoke Centre. Although these organizations offer a lot of useful services, many constituents are unaware of them and therefore can't always access the help that they need when they need it. We can all think of instances when constituents in our respective communities have reached out to our constituency office to ask us in assisting them in finding local organizations or elements of the government that can actually serve their specific needs.

That is why, a couple of weeks ago, I, alongside my colleague from Etobicoke-Lakeshore, organized the annual government and community services fair at Cloverdale Mall in Etobicoke. The fair created a space for 112 exhibitors, consisting of community service organizations and government agencies, to showcase the services that they offer. We managed to attract over 3,000 members of the Etobicoke community again this year. The fair allowed my constituents to learn more about the services that these wonderful organizations deliver and ask questions of staff and volunteers.

I rise in the House today, Speaker, to thank the 112 exhibitors from the community organizations, not only for participating in the fair but for dedicating themselves to serving my constituents, for making our community a better place to live, and for making a difference in Etobicoke Centre every single day.

PUBLIC HEALTH

Mr. Ted Arnott: The leadership of our medical officers of health and the programs provided by our boards of health and public health units demonstrate a focus on health, not just health care. This is essential, because Ontario needs a wellness agenda which promotes illness prevention and keeping people healthy, not just caring for the sick.

The Ministry of Health has frozen funding for cost-shared mandatory public health programs, as well as fully funded programs. Health units are being forced to do more with less and reduce staffing. This should concern all of us in this House.

The Minister of Health needs to listen to our public health officials. In addition to expressing concern about funding challenges, they're also responding to his Patients First discussion paper. The Wellington-Dufferin-Guelph Public Health board chair, Doug Auld, has written an excellent letter to the minister with constructive feedback on the discussion paper, raising the need for co-operation, collaboration, recognition of local communities' unique needs, accountability, appropriate alignment of LHIN boundaries and dedicated funding.

I've also heard similar concerns from the region of Halton. In particular, they've emphasized the need for appropriate alignment of LHIN boundaries and consoli-

dating the entire region into one LHIN area. They also stress the importance of ensuring that there is sufficient funding from the province to enable them to continue to provide the public health services that our residents need.

Now that the minister has concluded his consultation process on Patients First, I urge him to pay close attention to the recommendations of our public health officials and to remember Ben Franklin's old saying: "An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure."

EASTER

Mr. Joe Dickson: Like everyone in this House, I annually honour all places of worship, whether they are Tamil, Muslim, Hindu, Jewish or Ismaili, just to name a few, including ceremonies of Thai Pongal; Ramadan and Eid-Ul-Fitr, which marks the end of Ramadan; Holi and Diwali; and Yom Kippur, Passover and Rosh Hashanah.

This month, Christians will celebrate Easter, the most important observance in their faith, celebrated worldwide by almost two billion Christians. This important religious observance is preceded by Lent, which began on Ash Wednesday. I attended the Ash Wednesday service and Mass this past February 10, and received ashes on my forehead, to begin the Easter holy season.

March 25 marks Good Friday and commemorates the crucifixion of Jesus Christ and his death at Calvary, with Mother Mary at his feet as he died. Good Friday represents the sacrifices and suffering in Jesus's life and the selfless acts from a man free from sin to save those full of sin. They also placed a crown of thorns on his head, causing further pain, and also pierced his side with a lance, ensuring his death.

The crucifixion is the culmination of a number of events during Holy Week, including the resurrection of Jesus Christ on Easter Sunday, which will be celebrated on March 27, two days following the crucifixion, and his ascension into heaven 40 days later.

Holy Week, including the Passion of our Lord Jesus Christ, is observed throughout the Christian world, and Catholics in Ontario alone will pray in some 30 languages on Easter weekend.

LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR'S ONTARIO HERITAGE AWARDS

Mr. Bill Walker: I rise today to recognize a number of fine constituents from my riding of Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound who were awarded Lieutenant Governor's Ontario Heritage Awards on February 26.

Long-time volunteer Bob Alexander was presented the Lieutenant Governor's Ontario Heritage Award for Lifetime Achievement from the Ontario Heritage Trust for his 27 years of volunteering with the Grey Roots Museum and Archives.

1510

After working as a mechanic and serving in the Canadian army and in Korea, Alexander retired and, in 1987, began volunteering with the former county of Grey and

city of Owen Sound museum, helping them acquire a collection of classic automobiles and restoring them to their former glory. Alexander's most significant project was building the Bluewater Garage in the museum's Heritage Village and then moving it to its new site near Rockford.

Grey Roots, who nominated Alexander for the award, said it was his "devotion, creativity and vision over the last 27 years" that helped save some significant aspects of Grey county's history, including military memorabilia. Alexander is currently busy restoring a 1943 Ford Canadian Military Pattern truck used by soldiers in the Second World War and has no plans to stop volunteering.

Melanie Pledger, who is another Owen Sound native and a student of OSCVI, was also honoured, receiving the Lieutenant Governor's Ontario Heritage Award for Youth Achievement as well as a \$2,000 Young Heritage Leaders scholarship for her work documenting the lives of local soldiers who served in the First and Second World Wars. It is no surprise that this 19-year-old student aspires to work as a museum archivist one day.

Finally, members of the local Community Waterfront Heritage Centre were recognized for excellence in conservation for the preservation of the Owen Sound Marine and Rail Museum. The CWHC was formed to save the Marine and Rail Museum, which it currently operates in the city-owned former Canadian National Railway station. As part of this effort, I'd like to recognize the team members who made it happen: Richard Thomas, Jan Chamberlain, Wayne King, Linda Droine, Wendy Tomlinson, and also Jeff Robins, Ron O'Donoghue, Doris Fraser, Maryann Thomas and Paula Niall.

SPREAD THE WORD TO END THE WORD

Mr. John Vanthof: Last Friday, I met with several constituents in my riding who wanted to bring more local awareness to the Spread the Word to End the Word campaign. The word begins with "R" and can be used in a derogatory way to describe people who have intellectual disabilities.

I would like to thank Kayla Marwick, Kevin Bond, Dan Lavigne, Trent Matton, Dwight Guppy and Lyne Marwick for taking the time to explain the pain that can be caused by the derogatory use of that word on those with disabilities and their families and friends. It was a heartwarming meeting, and I was inspired not only by the passion for and knowledge of the issue, but by the commitment to change the community for the better. Many of us could learn from the example this group has shown. When asked if there were others who had helped the local effort, they identified Deandra Basky, Betty Stone and Flo Bruneau.

March 2 is the eighth annual Spread the Word to End the Word Day. Although the movement is closely associated with the Special Olympics, the ultimate goal is to eliminate the stigma that continues to impact people

throughout society because of the R-word. I couldn't find a more appropriate day, then, to recite the pledge we all feel in our hearts, and I'd like to take the time to recite it: "I pledge and support the elimination of the derogatory use of the R-word from everyday speech and promote the acceptance and inclusion of people with intellectual disabilities."

FAMILY DAY

JOUR DE LA FAMILLE

Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde: This past Family Day, I was proud to host my second annual Family Day event in Orléans. It was the perfect time to provide an opportunity for families to come together to have fun and to engage with each other. So this year, we went bowling at the Orléans Bowling Center. We had the entire venue for a couple of hours in the morning, where people could come and bowl for free.

Thank you to the team at the bowling centre: owners Roch Henry and Jonathan Piché, as well as their amazing staff, Cormac and Mike, who collaborated with us to make this event a success.

I also would like to thank the great community of Orléans, all the families that joined us, and our federal MP, Andrew Leslie. It was truly wonderful to see and meet three generations—grandparents, parents and their children—all together as they joined in the fun activities. We had an amazing turnout of more than 200 people.

Les résidents de ma communauté ont répondu à l'appel en grand nombre et ont pu partager de beaux moments en famille. J'aimerais prendre l'opportunité de remercier les membres du personnel de mon bureau, spécialement Anick, Maryam et Nathalie, pour leur aide exceptionnelle lors de ce grand évènement.

INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY

Mrs. Kathryn McGarry: International Women's Day will be celebrated March 8 around the globe. This year's theme is "Pledge for Parity," with the objective of "Planet 50-50 by 2030."

In my own community, the Cambridge Soroptimists are very active and volunteer many hours to improve the lives of women and girls through programs leading to social and economic empowerment.

Recently, I joined them to celebrate this year's Live Your Dream: Education and Training Awards for Women event. This award is given to women with dependants who are in financial need and are enrolled in post-secondary educational or vocational training to achieve their dream of a better life, through education. I was pleased to witness Amanda Rice and Mary Gay receive their awards. It was a proud moment for all.

On March 5, the Canadian Federation of University Women in Cambridge will again host a breakfast for the community to celebrate International Women's Day. The guest speaker is Lynn Spence, a well-known TV personality from Cityline. The Cambridge Soroptimists

support this event and have organized the second annual flash mob following the breakfast, taking the message "Pledge for Parity" to the streets of downtown Cambridge. I will be glad to join these women on the streets, carrying the sign that says, "Many Women. One Goal. Creating a Better World for Women and Girls." Thank you to Yvonne Kaine, Dr. Jean Skillman, Merrily Walker, Alison Sanders, Dianne Long and all the Soroptimist volunteers for helping to do just that.

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 Pr34, An Act to revive Bill Bedford Professional Corporation;

Bill 36, An Act to revive 839255 Ontario Inc.;

Bill Pr37, An Act to revive Base2 eBusiness Solutions Inc.

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

Report adopted.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

CORPORATION OF THE MUNICIPALITY OF HURON SHORES AND THESSALON FIRST NATION ACT (TAX RELIEF), 2016

Mr. Mantha moved first reading of the following bill:
Bill Pr38, An Act respecting the Corporation of the Municipality of Huron Shores and the Thessalon First Nation.

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): Pursuant to standing order 86, this bill stands referred to the Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills.

PETITIONS

HEALTH CARE FUNDING

Mr. Lorne Coe: "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.”

1520

I agree with the content of this petition, and I will sign it and date it today.

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 and present it to page Andrew to bring it down to the table.

LUNG HEALTH

Mrs. Kathryn McGarry: I have a petition addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas lung disease affects more than 2.4 million people in the province of Ontario, more than 570,000 of whom are children and youth living with asthma;

“Of the four chronic diseases responsible for 79% of deaths (cancers, cardiovascular diseases, lung disease and diabetes) lung disease is the only one without a dedicated province-wide strategy;

“In the Ontario Lung Association report, Your Lungs, Your Life, it is estimated that lung disease currently costs the Ontario taxpayers more than \$4 billion a year in direct and indirect health care costs, and that this figure is

estimated to rise to more than \$80 billion seven short years from now;

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

“To allow for deputations on ... private member’s bill, Bill 41, Lung Health Act, 2014, which establishes a Lung Health Advisory Council to make recommendations to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care on lung health issues and requires the minister to develop and implement an Ontario Lung Health Action Plan with respect to research, prevention, diagnosis and treatment of lung disease; and

“Once debated at committee to expedite Bill 41, Lung Health Act, 2014, through the committee ... and to immediately seek royal assent immediately upon its passage.”

I agree with this, affix my signature and give it to page Julia to bring to the table.

HEALTH CARE FUNDING

Mr. Todd Smith: “Petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

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

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

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

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

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

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

HEALTH CARE FUNDING

Ms. Catherine Fife: “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.”

Thank you very much.

PUBLIC TRANSIT

Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas there are critical transportation infrastructure needs for the province;

“Whereas giving people multiple avenues for their transportation needs takes cars off the road;

“Whereas public transit increases the quality of life for Ontarians and helps the environment;

“Whereas the constituents of Orléans and east Ottawa are in need of greater transportation infrastructure;

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

“Support the Moving Ontario Forward plan and the Ottawa LRT phase II construction, which will help address the critical transportation infrastructure needs of Orléans, east Ottawa and” our wonderful province of Ontario.

It gives me great pleasure to affix my signature and give it to page Tristan.

HYDRO RATES

Mr. Ted Arnott: My petition is to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, and it reads as follows:

“Whereas the price of electricity has skyrocketed under the Ontario Liberal government;

“Whereas ever-higher hydro bills are a huge concern for everyone in the province, especially seniors and others on fixed incomes, who can’t afford to pay more;

“Whereas Ontario’s businesses say high electricity costs are making them uncompetitive, and have contributed to the loss of hundreds of thousands of manufacturing jobs;

“Whereas the recent Auditor General’s report found Ontarians overpaid for electricity by \$37 billion over the past eight years and estimates that we will overpay by an additional \$133 billion over the next 18 years if nothing changes;

“Whereas the cancellation of the Oakville and Mississauga gas plants costing \$1.1 billion, feed-in tariff (FIT) contracts with wind and solar companies, the sale of surplus energy to neighbouring jurisdictions at a loss, the debt retirement charge, the global adjustment and smart meters that haven’t met their conservation targets have all put upward pressure on hydro bills;

“Whereas the sale of 60% of Hydro One is opposed by a majority of Ontarians and will likely only lead to even higher hydro bills;

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

“To listen to Ontarians, reverse course on the Liberal government’s current hydro policies and take immediate steps to stabilize hydro bills.”

I support this petition and have also affixed my signature.

PRIVATIZATION OF PUBLIC ASSETS

Mr. Wayne Gates: “Hydro One Not for Sale! Say No to Privatization.

“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 support this petition, and I’ll sign it.

LUNG HEALTH

Mrs. Kathryn McGarry: I have another petition addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario. This petition comes from residents of Welland. I’ve had petitions come in from Ontarians all over the province.

“Whereas lung disease affects more than 2.4 million people in the province of Ontario, more than 570,000 of whom are children and youth living with asthma;

“Of the four chronic diseases responsible for 79% of deaths (cancers, cardiovascular diseases, lung disease and diabetes) lung disease is the only one without a dedicated province-wide strategy;

“In the Ontario Lung Association report, Your Lungs, Your Life, it is estimated that lung disease currently costs the Ontario taxpayers more than \$4 billion a year in direct and indirect health care costs, and that this figure is estimated to rise to more than \$80 billion seven short years from now;

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

“To allow for deputations on ... private member’s bill, Bill 41,” speed it through committee and “immediately seek royal assent upon its passage.”

I agree with the petition, sign my name and send it down to the table with Charlotte.

HEALTH CARE FUNDING

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

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

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

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

1530

“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 that Ontario’s families deserve.”

Speaker, I agree with this petition, will sign it and give it to page Owen.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Mr. Michael Mantha: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas Sault Area Hospital is facing major direct care cuts, including: the closure of acute care beds and cuts to more than 59,000 nursing and direct patient care hours per year from departments across the hospital, including the operating room, the intensive care unit, oncology, surgical, hemodialysis, infection control as well as patient care coordinators, personal support workers and others ;

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

“Whereas these cuts will risk higher medical accident rates as nursing and direct patient care hours are dramatically cut and will reduce levels of care all across our hospital;

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

“(1) Stop the proposed cuts to the Sault Area Hospital and protect the beds and services;

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

I agree with this petition and present it to page Julia to bring down to the Clerks’ table.

LUNG HEALTH

Ms. Daiene Vernile: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas lung disease affects more than 2.4 million people in the province of Ontario, more than 570,000 of whom are children and youth living with asthma;

“Of the four chronic diseases responsible for 79% of deaths (cancers, cardiovascular diseases, lung disease and diabetes) lung disease is the only one without a dedicated province-wide strategy;

“In the Ontario Lung Association report, Your Lungs, Your Life, it is estimated that lung disease currently costs

the Ontario taxpayers more than \$4 billion a year in direct and indirect health care costs, and that this figure is estimated to rise to more than \$80 billion seven short years from now;

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

“To allow for deputations on MPP Kathryn McGarry’s private member’s bill, Bill 41, Lung Health Act, 2014, which establishes a Lung Health Advisory Council to make recommendations to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care on lung health issues and requires the minister to develop and implement an Ontario Lung Health Action Plan with respect to research, prevention, diagnosis and treatment of lung disease; and

“Once debated at committee, to expedite Bill 41, Lung Health Act, 2014, through the committee stage and back to the Legislature for third and final reading; and to immediately call for a vote on Bill 41 and to seek royal assent immediately upon its passage.”

Mr. Speaker, I agree with this, will affix my signature and give it to page Suzanne.

HEALTH CARE FUNDING

Mr. Rick Nicholls: “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 approve of this petition, sign it and give it to page Xavier.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

JOBS FOR TODAY AND TOMORROW ACT (BUDGET MEASURES), 2016

LOI DE 2016 FAVORISANT LA CRÉATION D’EMPLOIS POUR AUJOURD’HUI ET DEMAIN (MESURES BUDGÉTAIRES)

Resuming the debate adjourned on February 29, 2016, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 173, An Act to implement Budget measures and to enact or amend various statutes / *Projet de loi 173, Loi visant à mettre en oeuvre les mesures budgétaires et à édicter ou à modifier diverses lois.*

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

Ms. Eleanor McMahon: Speaker, I'll be sharing my time today with the member for Halton, the Minister of Community and Social Services and the member for Cambridge. I'm delighted to rise in the House today to speak to this conversation on Ontario's 2016 budget, on behalf of the citizens of my riding of Burlington.

Our budget is a commitment for our government to stay the course we mapped out in 2014 and to move forward with our four-part plan to invest in people's talents and skills, create a dynamic and supportive business environment, invest in public infrastructure and build a secure retirement; all while committing to our path to balance, which will see us eliminate the deficit by next year—a remarkable achievement.

Ontario is delivering on its number one priority: to grow the economy and create jobs through unprecedented investments in public infrastructure, increasing the competitiveness of our businesses and taking action in the transition to a low-carbon economy, while at the same time encouraging the very innovation inherent in the number one challenge facing humanity.

At the same time, we must ensure that we are meeting the challenge head-on, and are also seizing the opportunities that come with it. Why is that? Because our government believes in the innovative capacity of Ontarians, of businesses and of entrepreneurs. This budget seeks to harness their knowledge, skills and abilities, which will not only enhance job creation, but also build on our efforts to make Ontario a global leader in sustainable technology and innovation, while fostering the kind of business climate that will encourage the leaders of tomorrow to remain right here in Ontario.

Companies like Terrapure Environmental in my riding of Burlington are a great example of this. Relying on a highly skilled workforce, Terrapure develops innovative, cost-effective solutions to environmental challenges facing key industry sectors, helping businesses become more sustainable while supporting Ontario's transition to a low-carbon economy. Further, as a national company that operates in regions of the country that have put a price on carbon—notably, BC and Quebec—Terrapure is benefiting from its investments and innovation, and consequently from the cap-and-trade marketplace, as so many other Canadian companies are and will continue to do.

In my riding of Burlington, we have a nexus of small and medium-sized advanced manufacturers who rely on a highly skilled workforce. We know that seven out of 10 new jobs in Canada will be in highly skilled or management occupations which require higher education or specialized skills. That's why our government is transforming student financial assistance to make college and university tuition free for students with financial need

from families with incomes of \$50,000 or lower. We're also making tuition more affordable for middle-class families, because this will broaden access to public education and fulfill the hopes and dreams of thousands of Ontarians.

In terms of creating a dynamic business environment, through the Business Growth Initiative, this budget makes significant investments to create a more highly skilled workforce, support world-class research at Ontario's post-secondary institutions and provide significant support for innovation, research and development, so that we can shorten the distance between innovative ideas and commercialization.

We're also supporting competitiveness and job creation in key industry sectors, by partnering with colleges to establish a \$20-million fund to be invested over three years. This fund will better connect colleges and Ontario companies on applied research projects that result in breakthrough products and services for sale at home and abroad. I know this kind of investment pays dividends; I see it already in my riding.

We know that companies in Ontario operate in a global environment, and that keeping pace with other jurisdictions means enhancing the access to technology, particularly for our advanced manufacturers, a good number of which we have in Burlington. As a consequence, our government is supporting the development of these kinds of innovative technologies through a \$35-million investment over the next five years that will establish a \$50-million partnership in an advanced manufacturing consortium. This academic collaboration, with three leading Ontario universities—McMaster, Waterloo and Western—will focus on long-term industrial innovation projects to make Ontario a leader in fields like additive manufacturing and digital components and devices.

Investments like these are helping Ontario prepare for and contribute to a rapidly growing tide of disruptive technological innovations that are bringing significant and permanent change to the global economy.

1540

Our government is preparing for tomorrow, starting today. This budget demonstrates how the four pillars of our plan are working together to establish conditions for a growing economy, well-paid jobs and a higher standard of living for all Ontarians. Together, we are building Ontario up, and I urge all members of this House to join us.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Member from Halton.

Ms. Indira Naidoo-Harris: Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to speak this afternoon to Bill 173, the Budget Measures Act.

This budget is a plan for today, tomorrow and the future of Ontario. It's a budget that will touch the lives of the young, the old and those in need. It will have a significant impact on the everyday lives of Ontario residents. That's because it's a plan that will support our economy, provide jobs and build our communities; but

most importantly, it's a plan for people, one that has compassion and yet works to eliminate the deficit.

When Minister Sousa announced last week that Ontario will offer free tuition to low-income families, the reaction was instant. In fact, the announcement went viral, with young people all around the province tweeting the information out to Ontario and around the country.

The Canadian Federation of Students said it was “an affirmation that government has taken student concerns and suggestions seriously.”

The Council of Ontario Universities says it will “encourage greater participation in post-secondary education.”

Starting in 2017-18, the new Ontario Student Grant will offer free tuition for students with financial need from families with incomes of \$50,000 or less. But it doesn't end there. Tuition will be more affordable for middle-income families as well. More than 50% of students from families with incomes of \$83,000 or less will receive non-repayable grants in excess of average tuition.

Our government understands the importance of making sure that access to quality education is fair to all Ontario students. I know a little bit about unequal access, since the country I was born in didn't grant fair and equal access to education.

Education pulls us all up. It's a gift that keeps on giving, and no one can take this gift away from us. This is an investment in our youth, new immigrants, mature students and families. Eventually, as these students graduate and enter the workforce, it will translate into a more prosperous province.

On that note, I want to point out the continued progress we are making on job creation. People are concerned about the economy and how it could affect their family and friends. They're concerned that we are living in uncertain economic times, in a fragile economy, so they want to know that their government is taking care of their interests and their future, which is why Ontario's number one priority is growing the economy and creating jobs.

Let me tell you, Ontario is on track. Ontario is on track to create more than 300,000 net new jobs by 2019. That's 300,000 jobs, bringing total job creation to more than 900,000 jobs since the recessionary low in 2009. In addition, our unemployment rate continues to be below the national average.

Knowing how important it is to keep people working and keep Ontario competitive, the government is committing to \$400 million over the next five years to the Business Growth Initiative. This will modernize business regulations, lower business costs and make more Ontario firms into global industry leaders. Just think about that. I just returned from a trade mission to India. What this means is that this is going to open doors for us and for Ontario businesses around the world, and that impacts on all of us.

The 2016 budget also makes critical investments in the health and the wellness of Ontario residents. Hospitals

are at the heart of every community. It's where we go when our babies are born, when we are hurt and scared, and even when we have to say goodbye to loved ones. That's why, for the first time in five years, hospitals are getting more money, a funding increase of \$345 million. That's fantastic news. In my riding of Halton we are served by four hospitals, and this funding is great news for them.

Our government also knows how important it is to give more patients the option of staying home when they are sick or injured. This is something I hear almost every day. That's why Ontario is investing an additional—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): It's pretty loud over there. There's five people talking.

Continue.

Ms. Indira Naidoo-Harris: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate that.

That's why Ontario is investing an additional \$250 million to make more care available at home and in the community. As our aging population grows rapidly, it's vital that we start planning for it now. This budget adds an additional \$75 million over the next three years in community-based residential hospice and palliative care. I know this is an initiative that matters to my constituents.

We're also making hospital parking more affordable and reducing surgery wait times. And the budget proposes making the shingles vaccine free—free—for seniors who are eligible.

Interjection: Hear, hear.

Ms. Indira Naidoo-Harris: Thank you.

This would save about \$170 for our elderly and reduce emergency and hospital visits.

Ontario hospitals will also benefit from major infrastructure funding. The government is now investing \$160 billion over 12 years, starting in 2014-15. This is the largest investment in public infrastructure in Ontario's history. This budget makes historic investments, Mr. Speaker. That money will be funneled into Ontario hospitals along with schools, roads, bridges and public transit.

My riding of Halton is an excellent example of why this infrastructure money is so important. The Halton region is one of Canada's fastest-growing areas, and it's important we keep people moving and provide them with the services and facilities they need. In fact, I'm pleased the budget includes additional GO train service in Milton and I'm glad to hear that the Ontario government is committed to working with freight rail companies to provide two-way, all-day rail services on the Milton GO line.

Families will also be happy to know that the budget includes \$333 million over five years to redesign and consolidate autism services in Ontario.

To support the goal of ending homelessness, an additional \$178 million will be put into affordable housing over the next three years. I know this is an important announcement.

Mr. Speaker, there is something for everyone—everyone—in this budget: for youth, for seniors, for indigenous people, for middle- and low-income families. I like to think of this budget as a budget for people—it's Ontario's people's budget.

The investments are significant, but with a firm plan toward eliminating the deficit and balancing the budget in 2017-18. It will keep people moving, keep people working and give them more time with their families.

This budget is an investment in the people of Ontario. I am proud to be a member of this government and I support Bill 173.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The Minister for Community and Social Services.

Hon. Helena Jaczek: I'm delighted to rise in support of Bill 173, our budget measures act. Following up on the member from Halton, I will be focusing my remarks on the people of Ontario, including, and especially, those who are incredibly vulnerable in our society.

This is why we have introduced our income security reform action plan; because over the past year our government has heard from stakeholders about the need to broaden discussions on the reform of social assistance rates to include aspects of the wider income security system. And we've listened. The province will be engaging stakeholders in the coming year on developing an action plan for more comprehensive reform. We're going to be engaging with First Nations, Inuit and Métis nations to ensure that the consultation is an inclusive process that recognizes the unique experiences of all Ontarians.

So, an idea that has been around for some time and has been gathering a lot of interest both here and abroad is a basic-income pilot project that we will be entering into. We're going to be designing it over the next year. It'll require a great deal of thought. We're going to be building this action plan to reform our income security system for vulnerable Ontarians, and this basic income pilot will be one aspect of the research to inform that plan.

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Kitchener–Waterloo.

1550

Hon. Helena Jaczek: I would have expected all members of the House to be extremely interested in this.

We will testing the potential of a basic income to determine if it will provide more consistent support to clients, streamline the delivery of income support and achieve savings in other areas, such as health and housing supports. We're going to be having conversations with other levels of government, and we're going to work with communities, researchers and our stakeholders over 2016 to determine the best approach.

This is being recognized by many of our stakeholders. I was delighted to hear from Jennefer Laidley of the Income Security Advocacy Centre. As she said, and I quote directly from her statement, "The change in focus signals a reset on social assistance reform.... With improvements to ODSP medical reviews, the minister has demonstrated a willingness to work with community and

respond positively to community recommendations. In that spirit, we look forward to working with the ministry over the next year on comprehensive reforms to the system."

When it comes to child support and social assistance, we know that children in single-parent families are disproportionately and more profoundly affected by poverty. As part of our commitment to combat child poverty, the Ontario government will end the full clawback of child support for social assistance recipients.

Currently, families receiving child support have their social benefits reduced by the full amount of child support they receive. This means that families on social assistance are no better off when they receive child support, and the parent responsible for making child support payments may feel little incentive to pay. We will be working over the next year to ensure that this happens in that time period.

Again, a commendation from Mary Birdsell, vice-chair of the Ontario Bar Association's child and youth law section: "Ending the full clawback of child support from single parents receiving social assistance is a significant contribution to the wellbeing of children and vulnerable families in Ontario. It is a move that will contribute to the reduction of child poverty. The government's commitment encourages the parent responsible for making support payments to do so, because children will have the benefit of the support that's intended for them."

Unfortunately, I've come to the end of my time. So much good news in this budget; so little time.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Cambridge.

Mrs. Kathryn McGarry: It's a pleasure to rise today to provide my comments, on behalf of my constituents in Cambridge, to this wonderful debate in support of Bill 173.

A couple of things that I really wanted to point out: One is the ongoing commitment of this government to understand how important public transit is to managing congestion, connecting people to jobs and building communities, and their ongoing commitment in this budget to ensure that we are continuing on these transit investments. This is a plan, Speaker, that will invest \$13.5 billion in improvements across the GO Transit network to both increase ridership and reduce travel times.

I was very proud to see, on page 71 of the budget, that there's a section in there that talks about new and improved GO bus connections to the GO rail network for Cambridge and the Brantford communities. This means, as our government continues their ongoing dialogue with CN and CP, who are owners of parts of the track not only on the Kitchener corridor line but also on the Milton line—in order to be able to acquire and work with these communities to make sure we can deliver not only on our two-way, all-day service commitment, but also to be able to hopefully expand out to these areas sooner rather than later. As I said, we'll be continuing to find new ways to work with CN, who owns a portion of the Kitchener line, to complete that.

The other piece of the budget that I was really pleased to see was our ongoing commitment to health care, having a \$1-billion increase in the budget to manage our health care system over the next few years. I wanted to specifically point out, on page 80, that the government has an ongoing commitment to ensure that Cambridge Memorial Hospital will continue its expansion and improvements in order to be able to better serve our communities of Cambridge and North Dumfries township. I was very pleased, too, to see another \$130 million coming forward for cancer care. Certainly people in my community are well served by the cancer specialists in Cambridge Memorial Hospital, so I'm very pleased to see that ongoing level of commitment.

There's lots more to say. I support the budget, Speaker. Thank you for the opportunity to speak to it.

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

Mr. Victor Fedeli: I'd like to make two points in the two minutes that I've been given.

We heard a few minutes ago that this government's number one priority was jobs and that "Ontario is on track." But when you look at the 2015 budget, the government forecasted the creation of 78,000 jobs this year, but this year's budget has dropped it down to 46,000 jobs. That's down 32,000. Their own forecast tells us that they're not on track, which is quite opposite of what the member just said. In fact, if you look at last year's budget, they said that next year they would create 93,000. This year they said, oops, it's really only 78,000, down another 15,000 jobs. The next year it's 99,000, again another oops: They are down to 93,000, down another 6,000 jobs. Speaker, I can add these together and we can see over 50,000 fewer jobs forecasted than they forecasted only a year ago.

So they are not on track, and they are not on track with their deficit either. Yes, they came up with a fake number. The Financial Accountability Officer showed us. Last year, he said they were overstating their revenue projections for each year, and he encouraged the government to adjust their revenue projections to reflect this lack of revenue. Instead, they actually amped up their revenue projections, but it's all from one-time money. It's from the sale of Hydro One, from the cap-and-trade revenue and from other revenue that is merely one-time money. They have not met the revenue projections at all, and we are going to be faced with a severe hole in their budget come the election.

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

Mr. Wayne Gates: I'm pleased to rise on Bill 173. It's interesting that the Liberals would say it's a budget for the people. Then I guess my question to the Liberals is, why are you attacking seniors? Why are seniors going to see their drug costs nearly double? The annual drug benefit deductible will rise up to \$170 from \$100. Co-pays will increase from \$6.11 to \$7.11. We talk about how you're supposed to make it better for seniors. Nothing is in this budget, again.

Talk about the rising cost of food for our seniors—the fastest-growing users of food banks today are seniors.

Rising costs of hydro—they can't afford to turn on their lights. There's nothing here. And what are you doing? Member after member on your side is standing up and supporting the sale of Hydro, knowing full well it is hurting seniors from one part of this province right to the other—doing nothing about it.

The rising costs of medication—this is really interesting. You're fighting with doctors. Think about that. You're fighting with doctors, yet you are giving Hydro executives millions and millions of dollars in bonuses and salaries. Does that make sense to anybody? I don't think so.

You're closing hospital beds. Now, mind you, this is the budget for the people. You're closing hospital beds. You're cutting nurses right across the community; 1,200 nurses have lost their jobs. The one that I thought was really interesting was when one of the members over there talked about services in hospitals. I can tell you, in Niagara, we closed the Fort Erie hospital. We closed the Niagara-on-the-Lake Hospital. We closed two hospitals in St. Catharines, in Jim Bradley's own riding. We closed those hospitals.

What was interesting to me was that, in Niagara Falls, we took a service away. You know what service they took away, Mr. Speaker? People come to Niagara Falls to make babies. They took away—we can't deliver babies in Niagara Falls; they took away the maternity. Does that make any sense?

That's cuts to health care. I'm here all afternoon, and I'm sure I'll speak on it more.

M^{me} Marie-France Lalonde: Moi, je veux amener une voix francophone à notre budget aujourd'hui. Donc, ça va me faire plaisir de vous parler tous en français pour quelques minutes.

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Écoutez : on entend beaucoup de choses sur le projet de loi, sur notre cher budget de 2016. Moi, je veux parler un petit peu de ce qu'on va faire quand on parle de l'éducation pour nos jeunes. On parle de coupures sur l'autre côté; nous, on parle de ce qu'on va faire. On va rejoindre tous nos jeunes avec l'investissement massif que nous allons procurer aux jeunes du postsecondaire.

Je veux juste mettre l'accent : on était à La Cité—M^{me} la ministre, la procureure générale, mon collègue d'Ottawa-Sud et moi-même—et nous avons annoncé un projet d'infrastructure de plus de 10 millions de dollars pour aider la francophonie à résonner au niveau des affaires, un genre d'incubateur qui va permettre aux étudiants francophones la langue des affaires en français, parce que c'est important de parler français en affaires aussi.

J'aimerais aussi noter, pour les étudiants et les étudiantes de ma circonscription d'Ottawa-Orléans, notre investissement dans leur futur, au niveau du fait qu'on va leur permettre d'aller au collège et à l'université gratuitement.

M. Shafiq Qadri: Remarquable.

M^{me} Marie-France Lalonde: Remarquable, oui. Écoutez : avec un revenu annuel de moins de 50 000 \$, l'étudiant qui n'avait jamais pensé aller à l'école va pouvoir penser, avec des bonnes notes, à se rendre au collégial et à l'université.

Je vais vous dire, de façon personnelle : moi, quand j'étais jeune, mes parents ne faisaient pas plus de 50 000 \$. C'est certain que ce n'était pas facile pour moi de penser—j'ai pris des prêts et des prêts et mes parents ne pouvaient pas m'aider.

Monsieur le Président, c'est souvent une histoire que—vous me notez l'heure. Mais, je pense que c'est important qu'on aide nos jeunes à réussir dans la vie. Merci.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry: two minutes.

Mr. Jim McDonell: Thank you, Speaker. It's a privilege to rise in this House and to talk about this budget and the cuts that it involves.

They talk about the free tuition; that's just a sham. It's money moved around. We see where students are actually going to receive less money than they used to receive. It's going to cost people more.

What about the families who make a little bit more than \$50,000? That's not a lot of money. No wonder, under this government, we see more and more families making less than \$50,000. I don't know if that's their plan, but it's just more of cuts.

The member from Ottawa–Orléans talked about cuts. There are cuts in francophone affairs; there are cuts in agriculture. These are just some of the ones we're seeing. We're seeing hospital expenses—they talked about a 1% increase, but on the other hand they move money around. They're going to lose it from the lottery funds.

In the end, there are more and more people who are qualifying for these services because, unfortunately, there are fewer jobs out there. There are fewer good-paying jobs. Students in my area are going out west. Alberta has some problems, but they seem to be able to go out there and find employment. They can't find it in Ontario.

Part of looking after students, other than making sure they owe a lot more tomorrow—because what this government has done over the last 10 years is doubled the cost of debt, which means that they're just passing it off to our children and grandchildren. Those are big costs.

I saw the Premier talking about the need to fix the water plants we have in this province—15 years of boil-water orders—but failed to say that this government has been in power for almost all those 15 years. Where is the action over those years to fix these things?

We see lots of needs, but unfortunately, lots of needs are not looked after.

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

Mrs. Kathryn McGarry: I appreciate the comments that we've heard today from the members from Burlington and Halton, the Minister of Community and Social Services, and the members from Nipissing,

Niagara Falls, Ottawa–Orléans and Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry.

I want to reiterate some of my earlier comments: that I really do appreciate Bill 173, the budget measures act, and the ambitious and bold plan that we've got going forward, not just on one particular sector but on a number of ones. As I said, it's a bold and ambitious plan to move Ontario forward with all the billions and billions of infrastructure investment that we'll be making over the next 10 years.

Many of those projects are already designed and under way, Speaker, including the expansion of the Highway 401 corridor from six to 10 lanes in my own community. We're under way right now between Highway 24 and 8, and in 2018 we'll be looking forward to expanding the 401 again from six to 10 lanes, including an HOV lane, from Highway 24 to Townline Road. That's all moving our goods and services and our community forward.

I want to reiterate my excitement at seeing the health care increase to home and community care, another 5% in the budget, which will really assist people to get the right care at the right time in the right place. Most patients certainly want the care at home.

There are also investments in palliative care that I'm very proud of. I was a founder of the Hospice of Waterloo Region. And under my spouse's leadership, we had the first bricks and mortar hospice in our area, Lisaard House. So I'm very proud of the investments that this government is putting forward to palliative care in the province.

Again, thank you for everybody's comments today. I look forward to further discussion on the debate.

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

Mr. Randy Hillier: Speaker, it's a pleasure to speak to the budget today. I'm sure everybody in the province has been dutifully and diligently reading the budget book. "Few Jobs Today and Even Fewer Tomorrow," I think is how it reads on the cover of the budget.

This government has demonstrated clearly that they can't do anything right. From the subtle to the substantial, this government has been and continues to be a failure in its budgetary outlook and its financial mismanagement of this province.

I was going through the budget and I was really having a difficult time determining what element of the budget I would speak to in my 20-minute allocation. I came across a couple of things.

I want to speak about something that's going on in my riding: The Cordick program is facing closure due to the government's incompetence when it comes to financial matters.

There's something else that came up. In our daily papers today, I came across an article by Jack Mintz. Everybody will be familiar with Jack Mintz, of course, on the Liberal side. Jack Mintz is a renowned economist and professor at the University of Alberta. He spent a lot of time in the early years of the Dalton McGuinty government providing advice and much policy consideration

for the McGuinty government. Jack Mintz wrote an article in today's paper and the title of it is, "Who Really 'Rigs' the System?" I'll just paraphrase a little bit from it.

The Mintz article states that Bernie Sanders has repeated this line in his nomination: that the system has been rigged. Dr. Jack Mintz says that Bernie Sanders does have a point but things are not as simple as he portrays.

"What he should be railing against is politicians seeking power by bribing their base with free gifts from the government. If anyone is rigging the system, it is the vote-maximizing politician who achieves power with favours funded by others." That comment struck me clearly as from the Liberal government.

Jack Mintz goes on to say, "And, of course, politicians rig the system by shifting the tax burden of spending giveaways to future generations through higher deficits. Future taxpayers can't vote, so they matter little to politicians today." That's another spot-on comment by Jack Mintz when it comes to this Liberal government.

He goes on to talk about the "breathtaking list of subsidies for venture capitalists, automakers, renewable energy companies and financial businesses."

He goes on to state that the new Ontario Retirement Pension Plan will be a new tax for everyone except unionized employees. "The ORPP benefits are least for the lowest-income groups" in Ontario. That's pretty powerful stuff coming from such a renowned economist and former adviser to the Ontario Liberal Party.

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He also goes on to say, "The most important rigging by Ontario politicians is the debt that must be paid back by future citizens. With some hocus-pocus, including counting one-time asset sales as revenue..." Hocus-pocus: That's what the budget is.

Anyway, Jack Mintz concludes his column in today's paper with the statement, "Sanders is right. The system is rigged." He also went on to explain who has rigged the system, and it's the government opposite of us. Important—I hope more people read and see what Jack Mintz has written about.

I want to just give a couple of other indications—just some proof points about the Jack Mintz article. One of the most important ones is found on page 286 of the budget. If you go to page 286—and I know some of the Liberal members will have it—there's an interesting financial table in there. Since 2008, per capita incomes have gone up in Ontario by 16%. Over the same period of time, the per capita debt that the government has accumulated has gone up by 44%. Wages have gone up by 16%; this government's debt has gone up by 44%. A little hocus-pocus there, a little shortchanging, short-selling, today's voters, and certainly shortchanging tomorrow's.

One of the other things that Jack Mintz talks about in the article is found on page 297. There we see what's really going on. This government, in 2009, had an average maturity on our debts of eight years. That debt is now maturing at 14 years. We're ever extending the

length of time. We keep re-amortizing the mortgage on Ontario. All of us know that in our homes, we try to pay off our mortgage. We try to reduce the amortization. We try to build up equity. This Liberal government keeps extending out the amortization every budget, every year. We know what that game is all about. It appears that they've got a little bit more money for cash flow at the end of the month, but they just keep extending the debt.

You can go through this budget and go through the tables, on and on, and you can see what this government is doing. It's not been of benefit to the people of Ontario. Also, if you take a look at these tables, you will see that although we've near doubled our debt in this province, our assets have only grown by about \$30 billion. We've increased the debt over this period of time by \$150 billion, but we've only increased our assets by \$30 billion. That's a hole; that's a big hole.

They talk about spending money on infrastructure? Their budget demonstrates that it's not in infrastructure where we're going into debt. We can't pay the monthly bills because of the financial incompetence of this government. The money is not going into infrastructure; that's not what we're going into debt for. We could all accept going into debt to buy a house, or to buy an asset. But these guys are going into debt just to pay the credit card bill at the end of each month. They're extending the mortgage and amortizing it longer so that they can pay the credit cards.

This became really significant to me a little while ago—how this impacts people, how the financial budgetary measures of this government impact people. I had a Dr. Carl Rubino come to my office in December. Dr. Rubino is a clinical psychiatrist. He used to be a deputy minister in the Ontario government's Ministry of Community and Social Services. He retired about 20 years ago, and devoted his retirement to a group called the Dalhousie Group, who provide a program called the Cordick Education and Treatment Program to youth who have intellectual disabilities, or mental health or behavioural problems, and who have been excluded from the education process. They can't function in regular schools, so the Cordick Education and Treatment Program was developed to give these kids an opportunity to get an education. Dr. Rubino came to see me and he said, "This program is in jeopardy of closing. Can you help us out?" I said to Carl, "I'll certainly do my best." On February 11, 2016, this letter was sent to all the parents of those children at the Cordick Education and Treatment Program:

"The Cordick Education and Treatment Program ... will, with regret, be forced to close its provision of the treatment side of the program as of February 29, 2016.

"After 19 years of operation, and supporting over 600 youth from our local schools, who were not able to function in our mainstream school system due to significant social/emotional (mental health) struggles, this is a truly disappointing result."

I'm not going to read the whole letter. But that was the letter that was sent out to the families.

To give you an idea of just how convoluted, complex and complicated—unnecessarily so—this government has made things: It took me two months to find out who funded this program from the government. There was funding from the Ministry of Education, there was funding from the children's aid society and there was funding from the Ministry of Children and Youth Services. But guess what? No one knew who the program coordinator was. It took me two months. I eventually tracked the fellow down. His name is David Remington. He's in Kingston. It's interesting. I challenge everybody in this House: Go on the Ontario government website, their directory, and punch in the name David Remington or Barbara Landry. You will not find them. He's a director; Barbara is a program supervisor. They do not exist—but they do. It took me two months to find them, and we did.

On Monday of this week, we got approval for six more weeks of funding for the Cordick Education and Treatment Program. Let me put this in perspective here. The program runs the same as the school year. We were looking to keep the program running until June. The amount of money that the Cordick Education and Treatment Program needs to keep operating until June is a staggering—staggering—\$25,000. That's what they need. We've managed to get them enough funds to go to the middle of April—so far.

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You hear about this compassion and this protection of the vulnerable from the Liberal side. After three months, we finally squeezed out six weeks of funding for children who have social and emotional struggles and who can't function in a school setting. It's going to take more efforts and more time to get that funded to the end of June. We need to do these things, Speaker. Those, really, are their responsibilities. That's who government is here to help: those who are disadvantaged, who are vulnerable and who need our assistance. That's who we need to help, not Samsung. We don't need to help Samsung, and we don't need to help the Chris Mazzas of the world. We need to help those people who rely and are dependent on others for their well-being.

But isn't that a story? Two months to find a director—as I said, his name's David Remington. I truly wish and hope—because there's going to be somebody on the other side of this aisle, somebody in the Liberal benches who's going to be approached one day by a treatment and education program in their riding that doesn't have funding. They're going to be coming, pleading with that MPP to find funding to keep the programs in their riding. I don't mind sharing with you David Remington's phone number. I'll help you along. That's what we need to do. But it is going to happen.

We have to fix things, Speaker. We have to fix things. This is unacceptable. It is intolerable that a program that helps the emotionally disturbed and troubled and people with struggles, which is funded by the Ministry of Children and Youth Services, funded by the Ministry of Education, funded by the children's aid society—funded by who knows what else. Why does it take three

substantial bureaucracies of this government to find how to spend \$25,000 effectively? I know they can spend money. We've all seen them do it. We all saw them take moments to spend a billion dollars on gas plants. But to take three months to get them to agree to spend \$25,000 for kids who need help? That's a tragedy. That cannot be justified in any manner.

But that's what we see this government do: Spend the big announcements. The \$7 billion for Samsung, the billion dollars on the gas plants: Those are all easy to do. Nobody can hold them to account for anything. But I can tell you, the families in my riding, the moms and dads of these kids, are going to hold you to account. They are going to hold you to account, and you're going to have to stand up and justify to them why you've let them down. Why did you only find enough to keep their program going for six weeks?

I want to hear the response to the Cordick program during questions and comments. I want to see if any Liberal member will take up my challenge and go look for that program director of section 23 program funding. That's what it's called: section 23 program funding. Try to find it; and I want you to give me a call back, but take up the challenge. Go around and talk to the other groups in your ridings and see how their funding is being affected by your party—by this government. Maybe you're fortunate. Maybe the Cordick program is the only one like that. I doubt it. I doubt it very much.

We know that there are consultations going on across the province right now for these demonstration schools for alternative learning. They're all in jeopardy, and they don't make the headlines with this Liberal government. It doesn't seem to pull at their heartstrings when it's just moms and dads who can't find a way to take care of their kids. That's not a big photo op; it doesn't sound good.

They'll get up there and talk about their budget. They'll hide the truth. They'll keep extending the mortgage, keep extending the amortization. It's just a shell game. As Jack Mintz says, the system is rigged. And we know who has rigged it.

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

Mr. Wayne Gates: Thank you very much for allowing me to speak again. I want to talk about Bill 173. I didn't get quite through everything in my last two minutes about how we continue to attack seniors.

I listened with great interest when they talked about it being an ambitious budget, on the other side of the House. I thought to myself, "Ambitious?" I wonder if the 1,200 registered nurses whose positions have been cut since 2015 would think this is an ambitious budget. I would think not.

If you take a look at what is going on with health care in the province of Ontario, it's about privatizing health care; that's what is going on. It's not getting to the front-line workers. People say to me, "How can you say that?" I can say that from Niagara, because we just went through a nasty three-month strike with CarePartners.

What happens there is that the LHIN would give money to the CCAC, and then it would go to Care-

Partners. Guess what happens then? It gets to the front-line workers, but by the time it goes from the LHIN to the CCAC to CarePartners to the front-line workers, and everybody has taken their money out, there's nothing left for health care for our seniors. It's an attack. Quite frankly, that's what is going on with health care.

I'm going to be able to talk for another couple minutes through the course of this afternoon, and I'll explain that further. But I really would like the other side of the House to listen to this, because they don't look like they are, and that's unfortunate. Health care is very important for the province of Ontario.

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

L'hon. Madeleine Meilleur: Ça me fait bien plaisir de parler aujourd'hui au sujet du budget qui a été déposé jeudi passé parce que, comme le disait ma collègue d'Ottawa-Orléans, nous avons eu une belle présentation à La Cité collégiale au sujet du budget.

Il y avait beaucoup, beaucoup d'étudiants qui étaient là et des journalistes qui posaient des questions. Les étudiants, bien sûr, étaient très heureux. La Cité collégiale recevait 10 million de dollars pour agrandir La Cité pour avoir un centre pour les étudiants, un centre d'innovation où les employeurs vont pouvoir venir et travailler avec les étudiants. En même temps, les étudiants vont en bénéficier. Les « businesses » vont pouvoir aussi en profiter—de la recherche appliquée, comme on l'appelle. Alors, cela a été une superbe bonne nouvelle.

Et, la meilleure nouvelle était d'avoir réduit à zéro les frais de scolarité pour les enfants des familles qui font moins de 50 000 \$. La présidente de l'association des étudiants du collège était là et est venue nous féliciter.

Il y a eu aussi beaucoup de questions sur « cap-and-trade », beaucoup de questions. Bien sûr, le message qu'on a donné et le message que les étudiants voulaient entendre aussi, c'est que ceux qui polluent vont payer. Parce que si ceux qui polluent ne payent pas, c'est tout le monde en Ontario qui va payer pour nettoyer et pour réparer ce que la pollution va avoir fait en Ontario. Ça a été une très belle présentation, très bien reçue par les étudiants.

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

Mr. Rick Nicholls: I'll cut to the chase: Life is going to be more expensive for people in Ontario and for businesses to conduct business in Ontario, based on this budget that our current Liberal government has presented. I might also add that, for the businesses in Ontario, maybe a word of caution would be, “The last business to leave, please turn out the lights.”

I want to talk about the Ontario Student Grant portion. We believe, over here—as I think all of us in the Legislature believe—that education is very, very important and it's something that needs to be pursued. But here's the reality: Ontario students are already faced with the highest tuition costs in all of Canada.

Now, according to their plan—and they're touting the 30%; I want to talk about the 70% of students in Ontario

who are not eligible for full benefit of the program that they are talking about. They'll say, “Yes, but you're forgetting about the 30%”—and I know the Attorney General just finished talking about the 30% of people. But you know what? What I find interesting is that it's too bad—

Interjections.

Mr. Rick Nicholls: Speaker, if you want to interrupt them for a minute, because I find it very distracting. If they could just keep it down a little bit—thank you.

What I find very disturbing, Speaker, is the fact that 30% of students are eligible. You say, “That's disturbing?” I'll tell you why. It's also disturbing to me that more than 30% of families in Ontario, based on all the jobs that have left this province, now fall into that \$50,000 combined threshold or less. To me, that's a travesty.

We need to get this province back on track and get the people back working where that threshold can be raised. I look at it and I say, listen, then we can be doing something for the students of Ontario,” but not that way.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Kitchener-Waterloo.

Ms. Catherine Fife: The member from Lanark-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington actually quoted Bernie Sanders; he said that “the system is rigged.” It's hard for us not to feel some sort of solidarity in that kind of statement from this side of the House. Because I have the 2015 Auditor General's report, I have last year's budget and I have this year's budget, and the disconnect between what is actually happening in the province of Ontario and this government's response to these issues is profound.

Just before the member got up to say his statement, the Minister of Community and Social Services talked about how this government is going to be addressing the clawback on social assistance. This is a long-standing issue—\$280 a month, Mr. Speaker. So if a parent actually pays child support to a single mother who has children, the government finds a way to claw back that money, thus keeping those very women and children in a constant state of poverty. This is a long-standing issue, and yet the government has said that they're going to have to take a whole other year—April 2017. They're going to take a whole other year to decide that stealing from children and mothers who are on social assistance is something that they just cannot tolerate anymore.

This is where the disconnect on public consultation actually happens with this government. We've travelled around this province. If this government was listening, if the finance minister or the Premier was listening to the people of this province, this budget would look so different, Mr. Speaker, because they wouldn't need another year to decide that clawing back \$280 from the most vulnerable, poorest people in the province of Ontario is something that they have to take another year to look at.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Lanark-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington has two minutes.

Mr. Randy Hillier: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thanks to the member from Niagara Falls, the Attorney

General and the members from Chatham–Kent–Essex and Kitchener–Waterloo.

I will make this point: That two-minute round is called “questions and comments.” It’s supposed to be questions and comments about the debate. I’m glad the member from Kitchener–Waterloo was listening, but it was deafening, the sounds from the Liberal side, as they didn’t answer or ask or respond in any fashion to the 20-minute response.

I want to read this last little bit: “For youth in the primary grades (K-8) who are struggling academically as well as behaviourally due to a variety of mental health issues, we have been a soft space to land”—that’s Cordick Education and Treatment Program—“in safe, small, highly supported classrooms. Not only have academic skills been improved but primarily the children have been provided with support in managing personal internal/external struggles that lead to admission in the first place.”

Not one Liberal member referenced or commented about the Cordick Education and Treatment Program. Not one of them had an interest in it. The Attorney General went on a bit of a tangent about some spending announcement. As I said in my 20 minutes, they’re very good at big spending announcements, but they’re absolutely inept and incompetent in helping those who are vulnerable, those who need assistance and those who are calling out and pleading for government to help the disadvantaged. It’s a tragic, tragic budget.

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

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: I want to paint a picture of what’s really going on with this budget, and it’s something that this government does all too well. They are so great at telling people a message, but the problem with their message is that they say one thing, but in actuality, they’re doing something completely opposite and often completely contradictory to what they’re saying.

Let me just paint this picture for you. One of the things this government says they do is, “We are going to prioritize the people. This is a people’s budget.” Now, people would appreciate if the government just said it like it really was.

For example, when the government says, “Hey, we’re going to invest in health care. We’re going to invest a 1% increase in health care,” they should just say, “Hey, we’re going to continue cutting health care.” Because the reality is—this isn’t hard; I’m not an expert in this area—that if your inflation is 1.8%, and you have a growing and aging population, a 1% increase, if it’s less than inflation, is not an increase. It is still a deficit. It is still a cut because it’s not matching inflation. How can you say with a straight face, “We are investing in health care,” when you are below the inflation rate?

On top of that—

Interjection.

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: You could just say what it is. It’s fine. We would at least appreciate and respect that you’re saying the truth about what’s going on. Why do you have

to navigate in such a meandering way that no one understands what you are actually doing?

First off, let’s be real: Five years of funding freezes are cuts. That’s five years of cuts. On top of that, a 1% increase is also a cut. You’re cutting health care. Just say it. Admit it. It’s fine. You want to cut health care. We don’t believe in that, but you could at least say it. You could at least tell people what you’re doing: “Hey, we are going to cut health care for another year.” Just say it.

That’s the problem with this budget. I challenge someone to tell me how a 1% increase when inflation is 1.8%, we have an aging population and we have population growth, is in any way not a cut. Please explain that to me. I look forward to your explanation. I really would enjoy it.

Another thing: This government said, “Hey, we are going to be the most progressive, open and transparent government ever. We are going to broaden the ownership of Hydro One.” That is so disingenuous. Let’s be real. When you sell off a public asset, you are not broadening its ownership; you are narrowing the ownership. Just say it though: “Hey, we want to narrow the ownership. We want to sell it to some rich people and we don’t want it to be a public asset anymore.” Just say that. That would be pretty honest of you. That would be pretty forthright of you. People would understand: “Okay, you are telling it like it is. We appreciate that. We don’t agree with you; we don’t want you to sell our public assets,” but at least it would be telling people exactly what’s happening instead of using these language games and jumping through hoops and saying, “We’re going to broaden the ownership.” You’re not. You’re selling off a public asset.

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On top of that—this is the kicker—you’re saying, “Hey, we want to sell off this public asset to fund transit,” when that makes absolutely no sense. We tell you it doesn’t make any sense, but don’t worry about us. An independent officer of this Legislative Assembly says very clearly that it is the wrong way. It is in fact far more expensive, and selling off Hydro One will put the province in a worse fiscal position.

How can you spin that? How can you look someone in the eyes and say, “We are going to sell this public asset to build transit,” when it’s actually going to put us in a worse fiscal position, independently? I just don’t get how you can say that. Just say, “We need to sell it off because it’s going to somehow benefit us. We don’t want to tell you the real reason why we’re selling it off. There’s some secret reason that’s going to benefit our party and that’s why we’re doing it.”

At least I would say that you’re telling it like it is, that you’re telling us what is really going on. That would be cool. But there’s no way you can spin this. No one believes that. It’s just unbelievable to say that somehow it’s going to help fund transit. It’s not. Independent people are telling you that it’s not going to help fund transit.

You know this in your hearts. I’m sure you know this because this party—the Liberal Party—stood up in this

Legislative Assembly and criticized the Conservatives, bent over backwards, saying, “You are so wrong to sell off Hydro One.” You criticized them, and somehow that same principle of selling off Hydro One that was wrong when the Conservatives were doing it is now good when you’re doing it. How does that make sense? It’s just not logical.

In fairness, the Conservatives tried to do it and they had the wherewithal to realize, “We won’t sell all of it off. We’ll stop now.” They stopped. The Conservatives stopped the sell-off. You’re doing more selling of a public asset than the Conservatives. How does that make any sense? It’s unbelievable.

Listen, the reality of the matter is, let’s look at the position of people in this province. What’s going on with people in this province? You think that you’re somehow benefiting or helping the people. People are worse off. After over a decade of Liberal rule, people are worse off than they were before.

Let’s talk about how badly off people are. You want to talk about education? That’s a great topic. Education is a great topic. Let’s talk about post-secondary education: the lowest-funded public education in the country when it comes to post-secondary education—the lowest-funded. That’s a fact. Tell me if it’s not a fact: the lowest-funded in the entire country. You guys are funding post-secondary education the lowest.

We have the highest tuition in the entire country—the most expensive tuition in the entire country—in this province. I’m going to put it out there: It’s probably because we’re the lowest-funded that we’re also the most expensive. That would seem to me to make a little bit of logical sense. Under this government, the tuitions have skyrocketed. There’s no cap on tuition. That’s a fact. I’m just telling you facts. If anything I’m saying is not a fact, you can tell me. You have the chance to get up and do your questions and comments. The most expensive tuition in the province, the least-funded—these are facts. You don’t care about post-secondary education. You don’t care about students. That’s a fact.

You’ve been cutting education when it comes to our primary and our secondary schools. You’re cutting education. There have been continual cuts to education. Just tell us, though. Don’t say that you’re not doing it and try to come up with other jumps through hoops and makeups and reasons that don’t make any sense. Just tell us: “Hey, we are going to cut education. We don’t care about post-secondary education. We’re going to make it the most expensive.” Just tell us, because those are the facts. Just tell us the truth. Tell us what’s really going on.

When it comes to the reality that people are facing in this province, another major issue is precarious employment. What I mean by that is insecure employment, unstable employment, part-time employment. What is this government’s track record on that issue?

That is a major issue for racialized people in this province. In fact, the most impacted by precarious employment are women, so this is a women’s rights issue. This is a racialized community issue. This is a human

rights issue. People are working in deplorable conditions year after year. They’re working in situations where they are being exploited. And what is the government’s track record? Let us look at the facts in this situation. Here are some facts for you. Ready for this?

We have a newspaper article written by a reporter, Sara Mojtehdzadeh. She writes on May 10, 2015—here are the facts: “Over the past decade” of this government’s rule, from 2004 to 2014, “there has been a 33% increase in the number of temporary workers in Toronto....” That is a fact.

Let’s talk about more details. “The ... employment services sector earned \$5.7 billion in revenue in 2012,” a 72% jump since 2002. “Temporary agencies account for an estimated 60% of that industry’s total revenue.”

You have created the conditions for temporary agencies to flourish. You have created the conditions for precarious employment to flourish. Put bluntly, you have created the conditions that put people in these insecure, unstable, bad-paying, exploiting jobs. You have done this. This is your track record in this province. I’m just telling you the facts.

Precarious employment is a major problem, Mr. Speaker. This government is the responsible party for it. These are the facts.

Mr. Wayne Gates: I like facts.

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: Facts are great.

Let’s talk about another major issue. Folks tell me all the time—and I’m sure you get it all the time too—that life is getting harder. It’s not getting easier; life is getting harder for people. That’s the reality: Life is getting more expensive.

Let’s talk about some of those expenses. There’s one expense—and it needs to be framed the right way. Auto insurance rates in this province are the highest in the country. But let’s delve a bit deeper and see what is going on with the auto insurance industry. It’s actually an issue of fairness. It’s actually an issue of exploitation.

If you look at the reality in this province, this government said in 2010, “Hey, we get it.” This Liberal government said, “Hey, we get it: The rates are too high. We will do something about it.”

The finance minister at the time got up and said, “I’m going to address this issue of high auto insurance.” How did he say he was going to do it? This is important, because this is a prioritizing piece. The Liberal government said, “We are going to reduce the costs that insurance companies incur, and when we do that, it’s going to bring down premiums.”

So what did they do? The Liberal government eviscerated our benefits. They didn’t cut it in half. I don’t even know the exact percentage, but they cut it by, like, 75%. The reality is that this government, in one year, through one policy, decreased the costs that the insurance companies pay out in the province of Ontario by \$1 billion.

What did that actually look like? These are the facts. This is your evidence. You saw the same evidence when we were in committee together. The evidence is this: We used to have benefits that—one part still exists: catas-

trophically injured people get \$1 million of coverage. That's not a straight \$1-million cheque; that's \$1 million to cover a lifetime for folks who are paraplegic, for their rehabilitation and for the services they need so that they can live in their communities, and it barely covers their necessities. They have that. Those are the most vulnerable, seriously injured people in our province. They are seriously injured folks, and they have \$1 million of coverage.

After that, people had the ability to claim up to \$100,000. Those are very seriously injured people, but not catastrophically injured. That \$100,000 was slashed in half to \$50,000. People who needed \$100,000 now only got \$50,000.

What makes matters worse—this is the part that's the most terrible part of this whole thing—is that the government created a third category that didn't exist before: the minor injury guideline. That cap is at \$3,500, and 80% of people who make a claim in this province are forced into the minor injury guideline. Put bluntly, 80% of people who are injured in a car can only claim \$3,500. Before, those very same people could claim up to \$100,000, depending on how injured they were, but now they can't.

As a result, this is what has happened—and these funds aren't settlement claims; those settlement claims are separate. This is strictly for patient care. That patient care amount went down to \$3,500. I'm sure some of the doctors in your caucus will tell you that this is the reality. The care went down to \$3,500, and 80% of people now only get that amount.

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What that did is, legitimately injured people do not get coverage anymore. You'll hear countless stories of people telling you that, "We're seriously injured but we are forced into the minor injury guideline and we don't get coverage." So legitimately injured people were cut off from care—and yes, there were some fraudulent people; absolutely. Those folks were cut off too.

These caps—that \$1 billion of savings didn't just happen one year and stop. That's forever. You are placing caps on the amount that people can claim; that has eradicated the issue of fraud in a massive way. I asked this question to the anti-fraud task force chair in the auto insurance committee. I said, "The amount of savings that you have enjoyed as the auto insurance industry from the reduction in these caps is colossal. It's more than all of the fraud combined because you got rid of fraud and you also got rid of legitimately injured people." But this is about the priorities of this government. This government doesn't care about people. This government cares about the insurance companies ensuring that they get massive profits. They don't care about the fact that fraud has been eradicated in a massive way. They've got rid of legitimately injured people as well as fraudulent people. They don't care about that. They wanted to make sure that the costs went down for the insurance industry. Guess what? Surprise, surprise: Their profits have skyrocketed.

What has happened to the premiums? This is the question. The premiums have gone up by 5% in that time

period, from 2010 when those cuts came in. So we got less benefits but the premiums went up by 5%. How does that make any sense? On top of that, this government has taken away the right of people to sue if the insurance companies deny them a claim. So if I'm an insurance company and I deny you the right to have a cane or a walker, you can't sue to get that cane or walker back. That's what's the your government has done.

On top of that—here is the kicker—do you know which regions, which communities, are the hardest hit for auto insurance rates? It's not downtown Toronto. It is an interesting point. The Auto Insurance Anti-Fraud Task Force: I asked them this question in committee directly. I said, "Sir"—this is in Hansard—"can you tell me which city fraud occurs in?"

He said, "No, I can't."

I go, "Can you not pinpoint a particular city? People claim that there's higher fraud in Peel, that there's higher fraud in Brampton."

"I cannot," he said. He said, "I can only tell you that the GTA is more expensive than other parts of the province." That's all he could say.

Those are the facts, and that's fine. But the issue is that communities that are racialized, that have new immigrants, that are hard-off, that are lower-income—those are every community that has higher costs. Scarborough has higher costs, North York has higher costs, and Brampton and Malton—which are in Mississauga—have higher costs. All these communities are racialized, all these communities are low-income or lower-income, and all these communities have newer folks that have come to the country.

This is exploitation, and this government is responsible for these policies that are exploiting racialized people, that are exploiting new Canadians, and that's why we see very clearly the true priorities of this government. Those are some of the major issues.

Let's talk about health care. On the health care issue—we've talked about this but let's just touch on it one more time—this government decides that a senior earning \$19,500 is somehow affluent and they think that they can double their cost for a medical prescription. That is simply unacceptable. That is low. Why would you do that to seniors that are not even, in any way, in any broad definition, affluent? Why would you put that burden on them? That shows you, again, the priorities of this government.

Let's talk about the tuition promise that the government has given—again, great language. I support this idea. It's a fantastic idea to ensure that people can afford post-secondary education. That is beautiful. It's a beautiful idea. But when you start looking at the realities, initially the government didn't really talk about if it's indexed to inflation. They said, "No, no, it is. It is indexed to inflation."

What about the fact that tuition rates increase every year and we have skyrocketing tuition rates? "Oh, no, we actually didn't factor that in. We didn't really address that." Well, how can it then be completely covered if it's

not indexed to the increasing tuition rates? Now the government is saying, "Hey, we're going to backtrack. We're going to address it," which is great. I support you backtracking. It's important. Sometimes you make mistakes.

But the problem is that you're making so many mistakes. You're making all these mistakes. You made a mistake with respect to seniors, you made a mistake with the rollout of this plan because you didn't factor in the fact that tuition rates increase, and—the biggest mistake—you're selling off a public asset. It doesn't make sense to do that. There's no evidence to support this. In fact, the evidence supports not selling it off but you're still going to do it because evidence doesn't work with you.

Here's another example of evidence. I've got to give credit to our member from Parkdale–High Park for bringing up the issue of the Union Pearson Express. The model was so flagrantly a fail. It was such a failed policy. It was such a poor model, and no one can hold their head up when they look at that model. It makes no sense. What industrialized nation is making diesel trains now? What industrialized nation in the world is like, "Hey, we're going to build a brand new diesel train. On top of that, let's just compound it"—maybe there could be a reason for just that—"let's make it go from one spot to only one spot." Where every other airplane link in major cities of the world is integrated with the subways, and those are the ones that are successful—"No, we're not going to integrate it with the subway. We're just going to keep a separate line that goes from one spot to another spot and comes through communities that actually need public transit. But let's not put a stop in those communities that could actually benefit from it."

The people of Davenport would love to have a train that would stop for them, but now they have a diesel train that can't increase its stops because it takes too long for it to speed up and slow down, that's not electrified and that's way too expensive. It's such a flawed model that no one is using it. No one is using your train because it's not a good idea. You didn't design it properly; you didn't build it right. We told you before that there were serious problems with it, but you didn't listen because you don't like evidence-based decisions. You've got to look at the evidence. If the evidence isn't there, you can't do it. It doesn't make sense.

The final piece that I really want to touch on is the Anti-Racism Directorate. Now, I think that's a great initiative. The government did a good job. Years and years of activists—over a decade of activists—raised issues around the fact that we need to have an anti-racism directorate or secretariat to provide that lens to address systemic racism. It's a great issue; years and years of activists raised the issue. The NDP most recently pushed for this; New Democrats pushed hard for it. We're honoured that the government decided to move on the issue.

But we expected something. A budget just occurred. When this directorate was announced, a lot of people felt that, although it's a great announcement and a great

issue, an announcement without any funding is really just an empty promise. People have been a bit jaded, to be honest, with this government and its broken promises. Did this budget include any funding for the Anti-Racism Directorate? No. You think that you can trick people by announcing beautiful things without any funding; it's not going to work anymore. People will see through that.

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

Ms. Soo Wong: I'm pleased to rise this afternoon to speak in support of Bill 173.

I want to remind the member opposite from Bramalea–Gore–Malton how he selectively shared with us how we are funding the health care sector.

First of all, he's selective on what section he wanted to share with us this afternoon. We are increasing funding to hospitals: \$345 million toward hospitals. Having taught nursing for a number of years before I came here, the data and the evidence show that the focus must be on primary care and primary prevention, not tertiary care or the hospital piece. But we are increasing funding to hospitals to the tune of \$345 million.

The member opposite did not even mention that we are increasing a million dollars toward those affected by pregnancy and infant loss, \$75 million dealing with hospice and palliative care—\$170 dealing with the shingles vaccine for seniors between the ages of 65 and 70. There's an extensive section in the budget that deals with the transformation of health care, and there are significant portions dealing with seniors and long-term care. We are increasing—\$10 million to Behavioural Supports Ontario; and another 2% increase over the next three years in terms of long-term care.

I challenge the member opposite to say that we are not focused on evidence, we're not seeing increasing health care costs—and the fact that we have also expanded the scope of practice for nurse practitioners and pharmacists. I believe the members would agree with me that it is the right thing to do.

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

Mr. John Yakabuski: I want to congratulate the member for Bramalea–Gore–Malton for his speech today on the budget and how hurtful it's going to be to Ontarians. I want to pick up a little bit on that.

The Consumer Policy Institute recently released a study in which they examined hydro rates across North America over the past nine years. Not in one single province or any of the 50 states have hydro rates gone up as quickly as they have in Ontario. In fact, in Ontario, electricity rates have gone up three times faster than the inflation rate on other goods and services.

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But I guess the Minister of Energy, who's saying that things have really gotten better here, is taking care of the people now because in the budget, there's this insulting—absolutely insulting—\$2-a-month rebate. For somebody whose hydro bills have gone up \$1,000 under this government, there's a \$2 rebate on your monthly hydro

bill. You're getting a toonie, with which you can buy a small cup of coffee at Tim Hortons. I understand that the Minister of Energy likes to compare electricity and cups of coffee. So this is what their message is to people who are struggling with high hydro bills here in Ontario.

Remember: He keeps saying that there are other jurisdictions that are rising faster. The Consumer Policy Institute did the study: Not a single one of the other nine provinces—not one—but even more importantly, not one of the 50 states south and to our northwest have electricity rates that have risen as quickly as the ones here in Ontario.

This budget does nothing to give relief on electricity. You should be embarrassed to table it.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Kitchener–Waterloo.

Ms. Catherine Fife: The member from Bramalea–Gore–Malton raised so many issues in his criticism of this budget, and rightly so, everything from temp agencies to precarious work to the 1,200 fewer nurses who are in the system—which actually is a cut; you can't call 1,200 fewer nurses in the system anything but a cut.

On the hydro bills, this was one of his strongest points—and I want to go back to the Auditor General's report, because I always do. After the AG report came out on the energy file in the province of Ontario, this is what the *Globe and Mail* said: "On Wednesday, Ontario's Auditor General announced that, between 2006 and 2014, thanks to incompetence and mismanagement on the part of the province's Liberal government, Ontarians overpaid for electricity to the tune of \$37 billion. And over the next 18 years, consumers will be overpaying to the tune of another \$133 billion."

This government is going to try to rectify years of incompetence and mismanagement on the backs of the people of this province, be it in health care, be it in energy, be it around electricity prices. For him to rightly point out the fact that this government continues to move ahead with flawed policies—we knew that.

The member from Davenport was heckling him extensively during this period of time on the UP Express. But even this morning, the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs called diesel "evil diesel." Yet, this is what the government moved ahead with. We have a diesel train in 2016, moving through neighbourhoods in the downtown core of Toronto. The member from Bramalea–Gore–Malton is completely correct in this: short-sighted, polluting and, once again, mismanagement on the part of this government.

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

Mr. Peter Z. Milczyn: I'm pleased to rise in response to the comments by the member from Bramalea–Gore–Malton.

The New Democrats who I grew up listening to: They seemed to have different values than the current group sitting there. It's unfortunate that the member opposite can't take yes for an answer: yes to lowering tuition for those students in this province who need that help the

most—free tuition for those students; yes to extending the drug benefit to an additional 170,000 seniors across the province, so that they don't have to pay for their drug benefits; yes to the request from small towns and municipalities, who suffered so greatly through the municipal downloading exercise of the Harris government—our government is tripling the infrastructure funding for those small towns and municipalities; yes to the biggest expansion of public transit in the history of this province, in communities across the greater Toronto and Hamilton area, Ottawa and other municipalities; yes to more funding for families who have children with autism; yes to more affordable housing; yes to making life easier for Ontarians by eliminating the \$30 fee for the Drive Clean program and by reducing hospital parking rates; and yes to so many things that the New Democrats that I used to know always wanted.

This budget is a budget where in tough economic times, we're investing more money in the services that Ontarians depend—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Thank you.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Well, it appears there are a few feisty members over there, and a few over there who are exchanging blows and not going through moi.

We go through moi, okay? Thank you.

Mr. Shafiq Qadri: Our translators are going to—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): I don't need a translation, thank you, Mr. Teacher there. Thank you very much—

Interjection: It's "Doctor."

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Sorry, Doctor. Sorry, I didn't know the difference.

The member for Bramalea–Gore–Malton has two minutes.

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: There have been a number of amazing deputations from people in my region, the region of Peel. I want to give a shout-out to Fair Share for Peel, United Way of Peel, the Mississauga legal clinic and the Peel CAS.

They all talked about the reality that's faced by people in Peel, that year after year the funding has not matched the population growth. Peel is one of the most underfunded regions in all of Ontario, and this budget does nothing to address that.

I want to share with folks here some of the issues that people face in Peel: 17% of Peel residents are living in poverty, 20% of Peel children are living in poverty, and the waiting list for affordable housing is 5.3 years, among the longest in the entire province. Youth unemployment is at 18.9%. There have been serious issues of food security. The GTA faces about 52% of folks who are precariously employed, and a lot of that precarious employment is in the region of Peel.

There are some serious issues with what's going on in the region of Peel and this government has not addressed that in any meaningful way in this budget. They have not addressed the chronic underfunding. For years and years,

people of Peel have had to try to squeeze as much money as they can out of the little that they get, and the situation is getting more and more dire.

We want public transit, like a GO train. This government keeps on announcing that they're going to increase the GO Transit from Brampton downtown to Union; they haven't significantly increased that. They continue to announce it, but the reality is that people aren't seeing that relief that they were promised. The government loves to make the announcements, but the reality, again, is not there. People aren't seeing the increased ridership. They aren't seeing the increased ability to get downtown and to move around.

This government is not prioritizing the region of Peel, and it's disgraceful. We know that this budget is simply another example of their failed priorities.

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

Ms. Daiene Vernile: Mr. Speaker, I'm going to be sharing my time with the Minister of Labour and the Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry.

I'm very pleased to rise today to add my voice in support of Bill 173, our budget measures act. I sit on the finance committee, where I had the opportunity to tour the province, and I heard many concerns from many Ontarians. We went from Windsor to Ottawa, and we travelled the north.

We heard about such issues as autism, affordable housing, increasing social assistance and helping people with special needs. We kept hearing over and over again the importance of increasing funding in these areas. We heard those concerns, and we are delivering, with increased funding in all of these areas.

We also heard many voices speak to us about our need to invest in infrastructure. In my riding, in Kitchener Centre, we have advocates in municipal government, the tech sector, advanced manufacturing, financial services, academia and social services. They all told me how very pleased they are to see our commitment to investing in better transit.

The day after the budget, I held a budget luncheon. We had a tremendous turnout there, and many of the people in attendance expressed to me how delighted they were with many of the points within the budget. Particularly, they said they realized that the government gets it. In Waterloo region we are at the heart of Ontario's SuperCorridor, and I just want to read a small section here from page 10 that resonates: Our corridor "represents Canada's most innovative region, with dense pockets of start-ups, research institutions and world-class talent. To ensure its continued success, Ontario will work with partners to enhance the connectivity of the corridor."

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So, Mr. Speaker, to ensure our continued success, we are working with our rail partners and with our federal counterparts to liberate the Kitchener line. We're looking forward to making a very significant announcement before the summer to improve rail service in our area.

There are other very important investments in my region that are mentioned in this budget. For the University of Waterloo, we have an advanced manufacturing consortium. This is going to be in conjunction with McMaster and Western. We have renewed funding for the Perimeter Institute for Theoretical Physics. We are moving forward with our plan for high-speed rail. David Collenette, who has been named as the special adviser, has been travelling the province. He was in Kitchener a few weeks ago. From there, he moved on to London and Windsor. He's collecting feedback in order to advance high-speed rail. We are widening the 401 between Cambridge and Kitchener. The ION, our light rail transit system: Construction is under way, and I look forward to taking that first ride in 2017.

All of these initiatives in my region are tied to enhancing our innovation capacity. It drives economic growth and prosperity. I know that stakeholders in my community are going to be paying very close attention to how MPPs in my region are going to be voting on the budget bill. Do those members support the University of Waterloo? Do they support Perimeter Institute? Do they support all the transit projects? People in Kitchener and in Waterloo region are watching the way that you are going to be voting. I'll make sure that they know how you voted, if you are in favour of or against a—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): And I'm watching the exchange, and it seems to be going between you two. I would like it to go through me.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): I'll use Italian if you'd like.

Hon. Steven Del Duca: It's better than mine.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Thank you. So, from now on, we'll go through me.

M. Shafiq Qaadri: Toi.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Whatever. Thank you.

Ms. Daiene Vernile: My stakeholders in my region have told me that they are going to be paying very close attention to how Waterloo region MPPs are going to be voting in this budget, because they care about advancing transit and other investments in my region. Will they be saying no to KidsAbility, which helps children with autism? Are they going to be saying no to increasing funding to Grand River Hospital? People in Kitchener and Waterloo region are watching.

So I'm proud to see that we are investing in people and we're investing in infrastructure. That is why I support this bill.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The Minister of Labour.

Hon. Kevin Daniel Flynn: It's a pleasure to join the debate and hear the opinions of all members of this House, from all sides. My colleague who just spoke I think certainly did a good job of outlining some of the positive aspects of this budget.

I spent 18 years at the local level of government, at the regional level and the town level, before I came here. Those other members who have served at that level will know that we go through a very similar process, in that we all get together—the council gets together, forms a budget committee, and then everybody brings their ideas to the floor as to what they think should be in the budget and what shouldn't be in the budget.

I was counting, and I think I was first elected when I was still in my twenties. So this, I think, will be either my 30th or my 31st budget, and each one of them has been roughly the same. People have brought forward ideas that they'd like to see included. Of course, at the local level, you don't get the partisanship. At this level, obviously, you get the parties bringing forward either what they have run on in the election or what their philosophy holds. But each and every time, Speaker, it should be a healthy exchange of ideas, which I think we are having today.

But what used to make me mad at the local level, and makes me mad here as well, is that often the same people that are asking you to spend are the people that are also asking you to cut, in the same sentence. It doesn't matter which party is in power: That simply can't be done. Often you get fairly reasonable advice from the opposition party, saying, "We'd like to see this," or, "If you tweaked this a bit or if you spent a bit more money there, perhaps that would work better."

But, Speaker, when I look at this budget—obviously, when you take it out, as a member of the government, your job is to defend it. It's to tell people why you think it's the best way that we should be conducting ourselves financially in the upcoming year.

I'll tell you, it was just a complete fluke, Speaker, that the day after the budget I was visiting a grade 10 class. They hadn't paid much attention to the budget in the paper that day or they hadn't gotten it online yet. When I explained the tuition advances that we're proposing in this budget—grade 10s are pretty hard to impress, and these people were very impressed. I didn't ask them their own income levels—that would have been rude—but I think I could see in some of their eyes that this was going to make a change in their lives. Suddenly, post-secondary education was something that they could do. I think that perhaps before that some of them had counted themselves out simply because they knew that the family means may not have allowed for that.

When you see the things that are included in the budget—I find when I'm talking to people in my own community, when I talk about the tuition advances that we've been able to make, making university or college or skills training basically free for those people who earn under \$50,000, and certainly about half-price for those who are earning under \$83,000; when you look at the infrastructure investments that we know that this province needs—and people from all parties, there's nobody in this room going to heaven based on what they've done on infrastructure in the past—we are finally starting to get a grip on what we need to do. We are spending \$137

billion over the next 10 years and \$160 billion over the next 12 years.

I've seen the changes in the GO train service in my own community. I've seen those changes. I know what it means to the community. The community comes up and thanks me for it. It's my job to do it. Certainly, you can tell it has made a change in their lives and that they're able to go to the GO train station and essentially treat it as a subway. You don't have to arrive at a certain time; you arrive and a train will show up. When you go throughout the rush hour, trains are running in every 15 minutes, every 10 minutes. During the day they're there every 30 minutes.

We've just invested about \$2.5 billion in Oakville in a brand new hospital. It's the sort of thing you can only do if you plan for it in advance. It's only a thing you can do if you don't run from election to election. Instead, you look 10 or 12 years into the future and put the political election cycle to one side and you start to work on a forecast, because you know—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Guess who? Why is it always that the decibel level goes up when you come in?

Hon. Steven Del Duca: I have a lot of love to give.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Yes, and I have a lot of love to give too. Cut with the crosstalk, please. Thank you.

Continue.

Hon. Kevin Daniel Flynn: Thank you, Speaker, and thank you for calming that man down.

Health care is something that I think we can't help but look at. Certainly, all of us have been approached by parents who are dealing with children who are dealing with the challenges of autism. We see the investment in here for autism services. We've all said it should be done. We've all tried to find a way to do it. This budget allows us to invest about a third of a billion dollars for autism services, little things like hospital parking, things that people complain daily about. I complain about it; they're simply too high. We've been able to do things like that.

I think, on balance, if you look at this from an objective point of view, you put the partisanship aside and say, "Is this a good way to manage the budget for the next year in the province of Ontario?" When you compare Ontario on a financial basis relative to the rest of the world, Ontario is doing very well and should continue to do well. It's budgets like this that plan responsibly for that to happen. I understand it's the job of the opposition to criticize, and I expect them to do exactly that, but what I'm finding in the community is that people, by and large, think that this is a reasonable budget and that this House should support it.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry.

Hon. Bill Mauro: I want to thank my colleagues who have preceded me and for allowing me to have a few minutes today—about nine minutes—to speak on our budget.

I only have a bit of time, so I thought I would perhaps frame my remarks in terms of a rebuttal directly to the Leader of the Opposition, the leader of the Conservatives, who has been on his feet more than once talking not only about this budget but previous budgets that have come from our Liberal government having, in his opinion, ignored northern Ontario. So, Speaker, I would need much more than the nine minutes I've been allotted here today to try and fully address that, but in the few minutes I have, I'm going to do the best I can to just highlight some of the advancements that have been made not only in this particular budget but in previous budgets by our government on behalf of northern Ontario.

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What I would add, before I make my comments, is that all of us on this side of the House are aware that the Leader of the Opposition, of course, sat in the federal House for nine years and had plenty of opportunity to represent the interests of northern Ontario when he was there, and I think, over time, it will become a bit more clear for all of us who are working here in the provincial Legislature whether or not he did a very good job, if a job on that front at all. So we'll look at that as time unfolds and as we get near the end of this particular election cycle and the beginning of a new one.

I want to begin by—and hopefully somewhere along the line the Leader of the Opposition may have an opportunity to correct his record. He stood on his feet, I think at least once, maybe twice, in the House to tell people—not just in northern Ontario but primarily in northern Ontario—that recreational hunting and fishing licences are increasing; in fact, he's wrong. I just want to say that clearly, Speaker: Recreational hunting and fishing licences are not increasing. The leader of the official opposition has stood on his feet at least once and said that. If he's not going to correct his record, then I'm going to have to do it for him. Unequivocally, that is not the case. I'm not sure why he said that, but perhaps he can go back and just find some capacity to check on the research there, because it's just not the case. It's wrong. I apologize for him—not on behalf of him; I shouldn't do that. He can do that on his own. It's wrong.

On a bigger piece, we have some items that I really do want to highlight in terms of investments that have been made that have resulted in investment in northern Ontario and have directly resulted in investment in northern Ontario.

In 1995, the Conservatives took a public policy position—that's their choice: "We're not in the mass transit game." They did that in 1995. By the time 2003 rolled around, when we won the election in 2003, the Bombardier plant in my riding was down to 200 to 250 employees. Our decision as a government to invest in mass transit in the province of Ontario has led to that particular manufacturing facility going from 200 to 250 people up to around 1,400 or 1,500. It may be down to 1,200 right now, I'm not sure, but maxing out somewhere in the range of 1,400 to 1,500 employees. That is, by far, the single-biggest private sector employer in Thunder

Bay or northwestern Ontario. The impact of 1,000 private sector jobs that pay well, that have pensions and benefits, to a community like Thunder Bay and northwestern Ontario is difficult to calculate, but of course it is very, very large.

What continues on that front is the fact that we have articulated very clearly our intention to continue to invest in a large way in infrastructure over the next 12 years: \$160 billion. But when we hear infrastructure, what does it mean? Well, a lot of that infrastructure spending—and the Minister of Transportation is here and very supportive, because of course what it means is that there will be more continued investment in mass transit. What that means is, there will be more continued opportunity for the Bombardier plant in Thunder Bay to bid on and win those contracts so that the employee workforce of 1,200, 1,300, 1,400 can be maintained for years into the future. That opportunity will be presented to them as a result of our broader infrastructure investments.

Speaker, I want to make another point as well. Previously, the member from Bramalea–Gore–Malton was speaking about insurance rates and how we're talking—at least, I am now, in terms of the northern Ontario context. He brought a private member's bill into the Legislature three, four, five years ago that would have helped insurance rates in southern Ontario, but the number that it would have increased rates by in northern Ontario—it was something like 35% or 40%—was never argued by the member. He was advocating on behalf of his constituency. I won't take any affront to that, but it's important to note that, in the northern Ontario context of my speech, he brought in a private member's bill that would have increased insurance rates in northern Ontario 30%, 35%, 40%. He doesn't debate it. I've spoken against it here, I've spoken against it in northern Ontario communities, and it has never been challenged. But that's okay, on that one; he was working for his constituents. But in northern Ontario, that would have been the impact and the effect.

Our northern highways program in northern Ontario, again, with the help of the Minister of Transportation—the single, high-water mark for investment in northern highways previous to our party coming into power in 2003 was about \$250 million. That was the most money that had ever been expensed on northern highways in any single year. This year's budget—thank you, Minister of Transportation—through the northern highways program, will see that annual allocation this year be at \$550 million. Speaker, it has reached as high as \$650 million, and I think we even might have reached \$700 million in one particular year.

Overall, the increase in the northern highways budget since we came to power in 2003, the incremental number—not just the base number that usually is there—is in the billions. It's massive in terms of what we've been investing in northern highways. People in my riding of Thunder Bay–Atikokan and in Thunder Bay–Superior North are very supportive and very happy to see the investments that have been going on for a number of years in northern highways.

One example that stands out for all of us, of course, is the four-laning that is occurring—a large part of it actually done now; maybe one third of that distance, give or take, has been completed between Thunder Bay and Nipigon. A very significant project for us, and one that I say has been requested for decades by people. When are we going to four-lane the highway? Well, we're doing it now, and it's going on.

One other major highway infrastructure project that we're starting—there are not shovels in the ground—that I'm very proud of: A few years ago, I was pleased to announce about \$4 million. We started an environmental assessment on a piece of highway in Thunder Bay between Arthur Street and Balsam Street called the expressway. People in Thunder Bay will be very well aware of this particular stretch.

There are six intersections that exist on that stretch of highway—it's called an expressway, Speaker. Since it was first built, much of the expansion and population growth in Thunder Bay has been on the western side of that expressway. Now much of the population has to cross these intersections, which, in my opinion, are very, very dangerous. There's an intersection at Arthur Street, at the Harbour Expressway, at Oliver Road, at John Street, at Red River Road and at Balsam Street—on an expressway.

We've started and are close to completing the environmental assessment—a \$4-million commitment. I think the last public information session on that piece of roadway will be happening this spring or sometime this summer. Once that is completed, I'm going to be looking to the Minister of Transportation on my right here to say, "Here's what we have. Here are the design options that have come back. Here's another long-overdue project that needs support in the city of Thunder Bay—a northern infrastructure project that helps these communities be safe in their own neighbourhoods."

It is very important, Speaker. The recommendations will come in, and we will be looking for further assistance from the Minister of Transportation to help those projects go forward.

I'm seeing that my time is almost up. I wanted to speak quite significantly, if I had the opportunity, on health care. I don't have that opportunity. I have 40 seconds left.

What I will highlight, as quickly as I can: Years ago, angioplasty was established in Thunder Bay, for the first time in the history of northern Ontario: 700 people a year, lives saved; jobs created; better health care in northern Ontario at Thunder Bay Regional Health Sciences Centre. An angioplasty program: people not having to come to southern Ontario to receive that life-saving service.

We very recently announced with the Minister of Health, on top of the angioplasty program, that very soon, within the next few years, we will have established a cardiac surgery program to complement that stand-alone angioplasty program.

Very significant investments in northern Ontario. The list is much longer, Speaker, and I'm sorry that my time is up.

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

Mr. Jim McDonell: I'm pleased to get up to talk to the members opposite. I look at some of the major achievements that they are talking about: the bridge over the Nipigon River that fell up, as they say, and how smart that was. But \$106 million—we got a 42-day life on it before we're back doing major repairs.

Mistakes happen and people have to live with that, but here's a case where you're building a huge monstrosity. It's fine to twin the highway, build another bridge beside the other one and build another 10 somewhere else.

That's the way Ontario used to be. It used to add practical infrastructure and get results. I know that we're spending a little more money—\$600 million a year; probably the number is wrong. This government is collecting almost \$70 billion—billion—more a year, and they can scrounge out a few million dollars extra for northern Ontario? It doesn't make sense.

At the same time, we see life in Ontario getting much, much more expensive. Hunting licences and health care are going up. We see seniors paying more. We see driving costing us more.

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The only places I've seen health care improvements is where the community has raised money and actually funded their own projects. Unfortunately, too often we see, a year or two later, the facilities being shut down, like they were in Winchester, where we completed a major reconstruction or addition. The ICU is closed. Some of the doctors say that the doors are chained shut. These things are under two years old. Look at the money we put into that, and that's the result. Meanwhile, we have money to pay for political things like the gas plants—wasted billions—but we can't operate our health care units.

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

Ms. Catherine Fife: It's a pleasure to comment on some of the feedback about this budget. I just want to say to the member from Kitchener Centre that the people of Waterloo region know why I will not be supporting, why we can't support this budget. They're not buying the rationale around the sell-off of Hydro One. They are certainly not buying the fact that this government says that they want to do something about poverty reduction, when the budget says that they're going to do something about clawing back the child tax benefit for those on social assistance, those people who are living in poverty. The people know that I would never support this cowardly clawback, which the minister actually admitted exists right now, but they're going to take another year to look at it. Even the regional chair for our region calls the talk around these transit options "aspirational." We have to adopt, even, some of the language that this government is using.

Quite honestly, the budget consultation process was a flawed process because this government did not listen. Class 1, a company from Waterloo region, came. They made a compelling, smart, intelligent case for infection prevention in health care. This government didn't listen to that. They're not interested in the sort of feedback that is smart and intelligent and actually makes sense.

Quite honestly, Mr. Speaker, to the member from Kitchener Centre: If she wants the assistance of her MPP to actually hold this Liberal government to account on those environmental, on those transit, on those poverty reduction options, then she should call her MPP. I'd be more than happy to help her with that.

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

Hon. Steven Del Duca: It's a real pleasure for me to have a couple of minutes to comment on the debate that's taken place here over the last 20 or 30 minutes and some of what we've heard in this House.

I want to begin by acknowledging that on this side the member from Kitchener Centre, the Minister of Labour and, of course, the Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry all spoke very eloquently, as those of us on this side of the chamber do on a frequent basis, about our plan to build up this province of Ontario.

I want to specifically highlight that my friend the Minister of Natural Resources, the member from Thunder Bay, represents a community—for those interested in hockey trivia and history, he represents the community that gave birth to three players who played at the same time for the Toronto Maple Leafs. They were known as the “Flying Forts”—

Interjection: Same line.

Hon. Steven Del Duca: —on the same line—the “Flying Forts” from Fort William, east end of Thunder Bay, I believe it was: Gus Bodnar, Gaye Stewart and Bud Poile. That's a member proud of his community's history and the legacy they left.

The other thing that's interesting to note in terms of historical significance: Today, for those who don't know—and I know this because I am the father of two young children, an 8-year-old and a 4-year-old, two daughters. Today is known in many parts of the world, and certainly in parts of North America, as Dr. Seuss Day, for those who don't know. Dr. Seuss is one of my favourite political philosophers. I've got to tell you, when I think of Ontario budget 2016 and our plan to build the province up, it reminds me of one of my favourite quotes from Dr. Seuss: “You have brains in your head. You have feet in your shoes. You can steer yourself in any direction you choose.” It is clear when you look at the Ontario budget that this government and this Premier collectively have those brains in our heads. We are moving this province in a particular direction.

When I listen to members of the Conservative Party and I listen to members of the NDP, it puts me in mind of another quote from Dr. Seuss: “Fantasy is a necessary ingredient in living; it's a way of looking at life through the wrong end of a telescope.” I think for those watching

at home, they understand that that resonates with respect to what the members of the opposition say on a regular basis as it relates—

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

Mr. Victor Fedeli: I thank you for the opportunity to add this contribution.

We heard some accusations from the other side a few minutes ago. Our leader stood up for northern Ontario today, and the member across the aisle, the Minister of Natural Resources, said there was something wrong with what our leader, Patrick Brown, said; that the fees are not being increased. This is the minister saying this.

I will read page 191 from the budget, where it says, “Starting in 2017-18, fees will be adjusted annually to keep up with inflation....” Examples of the fees include “fees charged for driver and vehicle licensing, camping in Ontario parks, fishing and hunting licences, court applications, liquor licences and event permits.” The list of what these guys are taxing goes on and on and on.

I would have hoped that somehow, somewhere the minister himself would have had some inclination that his own department has fees that are going up. You would think that if you're going to make an accusation, at least you could be marginally accurate. That would be a shock to have this government be even marginally accurate once.

That indicates overall the fact that nobody on that side either has read the budget or—they certainly don't understand the budget because they don't understand the pain that they are inflicting on the people of Ontario with the fees that are going up.

As I said in the national media, they are now digging in the couch for nickels and dimes when they've got parks and hunting and fishing licences going up. They're hurting northern Ontario. Our leader, Patrick Brown, stood up for northern Ontario and I say thank you to him.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry has two minutes.

Hon. Bill Mauro: I want to thank all the members who have spoken.

One of the other points I did not have an opportunity to respond to, in terms of what has occurred in northern Ontario—a bit of a train wreck that was left for us by the outgoing Conservative government in 2003—was the issue in health care around orphaned patients.

When we came to government in 2003, in my community of Thunder Bay–Atikokan, there were 35,000 orphaned patients; that is, patients who did not have access to a primary care provider in my community of Thunder Bay–Atikokan. Think about it: 35,000 orphaned patients in one city in northern Ontario. I'm sure at some point the leader of the official—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Stop the clock. When I stand, you sit. Stop the clock. I would like the member from Nipissing to cut it back a bit, please. I'll determine who sits and who stands.

Go ahead.

Hon. Bill Mauro: Speaker, thank you very much.

I feel the need to repeat: 35,000 orphaned patients did not have access to a primary care provider in the city of Thunder Bay when we came to government in 2003. This is underpinned, of course, by the fact that we've hired about 5,600 more doctors, that we've hired about 24,000 more nurses, give or take; the fact that 10,800 of those nurses are RNs and, in fact, that in this budget we increased the funding for nurse practitioners.

Why is it important that I talk about nurse practitioners? It's important because we created the nurse practitioner clinic model and the nurse practitioner clinic model is going a long way to helping us reduce that number of orphaned patients that exist primarily—not only, but primarily—in northern Ontario communities.

It's a great service model; people love it. We committed to creating 25 nurse practitioner clinics all across northern Ontario. There are approximately three, maybe four, in Thunder Bay. That model, Speaker, I can tell you, is a spectacular success. The nurse practitioner investment this budget brings forward is helping bring the 35,000 orphaned-patient-legacy number from the Conservatives down and we're—

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Thank you.

Before I read this, if this continues the way we're going—certain individuals know who they are—we're going to start warning once and then we're going to start

naming. That's it, folks. The Speaker has had enough. That goes for everybody.

Pursuant to standing order 47(c), I am now required to interrupt the proceedings and announce that there have been more than six and one-half hours of debate on the motion for second reading of this bill. This debate will therefore be deemed adjourned unless the government House leader specifies otherwise.

Minister of Transportation?

Hon. Steven Del Duca: No, Speaker.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Orders of the day.

Hon. Steven Del Duca: Speaker, no further business.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The Minister of Transportation has moved adjournment of the House?

Hon. Steven Del Duca: I move adjournment of the House.

Interjection: No.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): I heard a no.

All those in favour, please say "aye."

All those opposed, please say "nay."

Interjections: Nay.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): I heard some nays. I believe the ayes have it.

This House stands adjourned until tomorrow morning at 9 o'clock.

The House adjourned at 1740.

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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	
Zimmer, Hon. / L'hon. David (LIB)	Willowdale	Minister of Aboriginal Affairs / Ministre des Affaires autochtones

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Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Monique Taylor
Bas Balkissoon, Chris Ballard
Grant Crack, Cheri DiNovo
Han Dong, Michael Harris
Sophie Kiwala, Todd Smith
Monique Taylor
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Eric Rennie

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Comité permanent des finances et des affaires économiques**

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Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Peter Z. Milczyn
Laura Albanese, Yvan Baker
Toby Barrett, Victor Fedeli
Catherine Fife, Ann Hoggarth
Peter Z. Milczyn, Daiene Vernile
Soo Wong
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Eric Rennie

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Mike Colle, Grant Crack
Joe Dickson, Lisa Gretzky
Ann Hoggarth, Sophie Kiwala
Jim McDonnell, Eleanor McMahon
Lisa M. Thompson
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Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Cristina Martins
Robert Bailey, Vic Dhillon
John Fraser, Wayne Gates
Marie-France Lalonde, Harinder Malhi
Cristina Martins, Randy Pettapiece
Lou Rinaldi
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Sylwia Przewdziecki

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la justice**

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Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Lorenzo Berardinetti
Lorenzo Berardinetti, Bob Delaney
Randy Hillier, Michael Mantha
Cristina Martins, Indira Naidoo-Harris
Arthur Potts, Shafiq Qadri
Laurie Scott
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Christopher Tyrell

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Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Jack MacLaren
Granville Anderson, Bas Balkissoon
Chris Ballard, Steve Clark
Jack MacLaren, Michael Mantha
Eleanor McMahon, Monte McNaughton
Soo Wong
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Trevor Day

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des comptes publics**

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Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Lisa MacLeod
Han Dong, John Fraser
Ernie Hardeman, Percy Hatfield
Lisa MacLeod, Harinder Malhi
Julia Munro, Arthur Potts
Lou Rinaldi
Committee Clerk / 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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