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Wednesday 9 March 2016

Mercredi 9 mars 2016

Speaker
Honourable Dave Levac

Clerk
Deborah Deller

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L'honorable Dave Levac

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
OF ONTARIO

Wednesday 9 March 2016

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE
DE L'ONTARIO

Mercredi 9 mars 2016

The House met at 0900.

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

Prayers.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

2016 ONTARIO BUDGET

BUDGET DE L'ONTARIO DE 2016

Resuming the debate adjourned on March 3, 2016, on the motion that this House approves in general the budgetary policy of the government.

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: It's my honour to rise on behalf of Ontario's New Democratic caucus to speak to the Liberal budget motion. I'll be splitting my lead this morning with the finance critic for our caucus, the member for Kitchener–Waterloo.

Heading into this budget, like many Ontarians, I was hopeful; hopeful that the Premier was truly listening to the people of this province. Not just talking about listening and consulting, but really listening to the people of Ontario, because over the last couple of years, most Ontarians have seen a Premier and a government that look out of step and out of touch with the real struggles, the real challenges, the real hopes of families across this province.

Increasingly, people are telling me about their disappointment in this Premier; increasingly, people are asking what happened to the change that she promised; and, increasingly, people are questioning this Premier's priorities. They see a Premier who at every turn, Speaker, seems more and more preoccupied with the well-being and success of the Liberal Party than she is with the well-being and success of Ontario families, children and seniors.

For anyone who doesn't yet believe that this Premier is out of touch and not listening, you need only to look at the Premier's decision to ignore more than 80% of Ontarians, listen to a small group of Liberal cabinet ministers and private investors and start selling off Hydro One. The Liberals chose to put private profits ahead of the priorities of people, and Ontarians are seeing that.

I was hopeful that this budget would mark a big shift and focus on the basics that a government just can't afford to get wrong: the basics like good jobs, jobs for young people who, frankly, deserve a much better start in life than an unpaid internship, and for countless moms

and dads who are working hard but still stuck in low-paying, part-time jobs with no benefits and no security; jobs that leave their families on the edge of poverty.

I have to tell you, the Liberals have a new word for this—no word of a lie, Speaker. In the House last Thursday, the associate finance minister referred to low-paying, insecure, precarious jobs as “contemporary mobile employment.” That's the new Liberal word for precarious work. Only the Liberals can make getting hosed sound like it's modern and exciting.

A government should get the basics right, like good schools, to ensure that every classroom has the right supports for students. That's something parents should be able to trust their governments to do. It is one of the basics, Speaker, basics like strengthening our public health care so that it's there for our loved ones when they need it.

I was optimistic that the Premier would take a hard look around Ontario today and realize that it's time for her government to focus on what matters to most people, because we have so many strengths in this province. We have so much potential to build the future that we want to share, and yet that's not where this government is taking us.

The truth is that for most people, life is getting tougher and life is getting harder. Families are struggling. Seniors are still waiting hundreds of days for the home care that they need and years and years on end for the long-term care that they need. It actually breaks your heart to see what's happening to seniors under the Liberals' watch here in the province of Ontario. Students who need extra support are seeing less of it in the classroom instead of more.

Les gens du Nord ne peuvent toujours pas compter sur ce gouvernement pour assurer la sécurité des routes dans la saison hivernale. In fact, the failure of the brand new Nipigon bridge shows that northern infrastructure problems are getting worse here in Ontario, not better. When you talk to northerners, Speaker, they're ready to bolt. They want to get out of Ontario, because this Liberal government is treating the north so badly.

All of us can see in our own communities, in our own backyards, that the real needs of people just are not being met. Child poverty is growing again here in the city of Toronto. That's not what was supposed to happen, Speaker, but the gap between the rich and poor continues to widen here in Liberal Ontario.

The wait-list for affordable housing in Windsor just reached a record high a couple of weeks ago, and First Nations communities were forced to declare a state of

emergency in February because the health needs of indigenous peoples are still not being met by the provincial and federal governments. Shameful does not begin to describe it, Speaker. Just calling it wrong does not even begin to actually make things right, but the truth is that growing inequality continues to shape the lives of far too many people in this province.

I hoped that the Premier would actually see that and use this budget as the perfect opportunity to start to fix it, because we find ourselves at a point in this province where we face some critical questions. Are we really going to give up on trying to make life a little easier for people? Are we really going to accept that the government and the Premier should only work for some people and not for all Ontarians? And are we really going to stand by and watch as inequality grows, the gaps get wider and more and more people fall through the cracks?

Are we going to let that happen in Ontario, or will we put the government to work to tackle inequality and inequity? Will we focus on lifting people up, not cutting down the supports that communities need? And will we refuse to let two Ontarios grow further and further apart? That's the choice in front of all Ontarians. It's stark, it's real, and it's being played out in the lives of millions of people on a daily basis.

When you read through the budget, you can't help but see what's missing from this Liberal document. There is no plan in this budget to repair the damage in our health care system. For the seventh straight year, hospital funding will not keep up with the rate of inflation. And front-line nurses—kind of like the nurses I sat and talked with in London this past week—know that hospitals will be forced to make even deeper cuts to patient care.

0910

When it comes to post-secondary education, the Liberals did announce that they are reforming the way student assistance is delivered to students. That's a good thing. New Democrats know that students have been calling for changes like this for years. We all know that having the highest tuition fees in the entire country has stood in the way of too many Ontario students. Expanding access to university and college is, of course, something that New Democrats support, but we still have questions about how this is going to roll out.

When it comes to post-secondary education, there is no new money in this budget dedicated to making university or college education more accessible or more affordable, and no confirmation of a tuition cap when the new program comes into play. These are concerning facts. There's still an expectation that the lowest-income families will be able to contribute, or will be required to contribute, large amounts of money for their kids' post-secondary education. I don't think the government is being all that up front about that reality. And there's no plan to help graduates who can't get a handle on their student debt and still can't find a good job upon graduation. Ontario students deserve better. They deserve better access to university and college, they deserve not to graduate with mortgage-sized debts, but most im-

portantly, we have to remember that education doesn't magically start at the first year of university; it starts in our public schools, from day one.

In fact, it starts with affordable, licensed, public child care, the kind of child care that too many families can't find and certainly can't afford in Liberal Ontario. In this budget, there's no help for parents who need child care—zero—no help for parents who need child care and no plan to reverse the cuts to schools that last year alone saw \$430 million taken out of our classrooms, notwithstanding the fact that more and more students are sounding alarm bells about the fact that they cannot get the supports and help they need to succeed at school. Yet this government pulled \$430 million out of the school system instead of using those funds to help those kids who are struggling, to make sure they have an opportunity to reach their full potential here in the province of Ontario. The Liberals like to talk a good game about these concepts, about these values, but when it comes to investing in the kinds of programs that help kids actually reach their full potential, the Liberals are AWOL and the budget was AWOL.

In fact, what we do see in this budget are plans that take us in the complete wrong direction and leave too many people worse off. The government actually admits in their budget that they will fall 60,000 jobs short of their job creation target—60,000 jobs short in a budget that's called Jobs for Today and Tomorrow. They call their budget Jobs for Today and Tomorrow, and yet, one of the first things they do is acknowledge that they're not going to reach the jobs target they set for themselves in last year's budget. And guess what? Last year, they actually downgraded their jobs projection by 65,000 jobs.

So year after year, this government talks a great game about job creation while we see more and more people in precarious work, while we see more and more students working in the hospitality industry instead of in the fields they studied for, while we see good manufacturing jobs leave this province and while we see entire communities in the highest figures when it comes to unemployment rates in this province—in fact, in this country—over and over again. Yet in the Jobs for Today and Tomorrow budget, the Liberals are pulling back their estimate of how many jobs they'll be able to support or create in 2016-17. It does not bode well for those struggling families; it does not bode well for those young people who are trying to get a start in life.

Speaker, it's a failure of a budget. The next thing you know, the Liberals will pull the same trick they pulled with poverty and homelessness. They're just going to stop setting job targets altogether, just like they stopped setting targets for homelessness and poverty reduction. That's exactly what the Liberals have done, because they never meet their targets. They talk a great game and they put these targets out there, and then year after year after year goes by, and, instead of reducing child poverty, they're actually allowing child poverty to grow here in the city of Toronto. Regardless of all of their rhetoric, of all of their lovely promises, of all of their beautiful

headlines, kids are still going to school hungry; families are still not able to put a decent roof over the heads of their children and their family. That is what's happening in Liberal Ontario after a dozen years with this government in office. It is shameful.

So what do they do? They stop setting actual targets. They stop setting actual targets, and they don't increase the kinds of revenues that are supposed to be utilized to reduce some of the poverty in this province. In fact, they say, "Oh, well, we kept it the same," but of course we know that inflation erodes the value of that investment, and yet they talk a good game about how much they're investing while we watch child poverty grow here in the city of Toronto. It is shameful, Speaker. Anyway, that's what we can expect. Probably next year, there won't be any jobs targets at all in the Liberal budget. That's a prediction I'm making right here and now, Speaker. We'll see if it comes true or not.

On climate change, do you know what? We are still waiting for meaningful action on climate change. New Democrats have been calling for meaningful action on climate change for years, Speaker. But for cap-and-trade to actually work for all Ontarians, it needs to follow three basic principles, and this is what New Democrats are concerned about: It needs to be fair, it needs to be transparent and it needs to be effective. I think those are three fundamentals that most people would agree need to be a part of a climate change plan for this province.

It needs to be fair so that struggling families and northerners don't have to foot the whole bill while the biggest polluters and emitters get a free pass. I can tell you that low-income families, moderate-income families and northerners are feeling the hits from this government like you wouldn't believe. I'm heading up to north-western Ontario pretty soon, Speaker. I can tell you that I'm expecting to hear an earful from those folks who feel that this Liberal government has abandoned them year after year after year. And now we have a climate change plan that the government has put forward that does not even acknowledge—does not even acknowledge—the severity of the winter climate in the north, the length of the winter season in northern Ontario. It doesn't even acknowledge that those Ontarians—yes, believe it or not, they're part of our province, at least for now, right? And yet this government refuses to acknowledge, doesn't even bother to build in some kind of fairness for those folks. And it's the same for low-income families and moderate-income families.

The bottom line is: People cannot afford the increases in the daily cost of living that this government has caused families. People are telling me that they can't pay their hydro bills now. They're making choices around heat and putting food on the table because of what this government has done with our electricity system and the mess that it has made with privatization in that sector. They don't know what to do next. And now, instead of actually building into this climate change plan some fairness around those struggling families, the Liberals are in la-la land, as usual. They have no concept. They are out of

touch. They are clueless when it comes to what's happening to real families in this province. Speaker, this budget shows that in spades.

So it has to be fair. That's what New Democrats say about a climate change plan: It has to be fair. It has to be transparent as well, to make certain that every single dollar that's collected in this cap-and-trade plan is used to reduce emissions and doesn't become the next slush fund for the Liberals.

I have to tell you that after being in this House six months after the Liberals first came to office back in 2003—I was elected in 2004—we have seen boondoggle after boondoggle, scandal after scandal, and waste after waste after waste of good, hard-earned public dollars because these Liberals just cannot seem to get it right no matter what they do.

0920

In fact, I was talking to somebody just yesterday who said that they think that the Liberals are like the reverse Midas: Everything they touch certainly doesn't turn to gold. I'm not going to tell you what they said it turns to, Speaker, because that would not be parliamentary language.

But the bottom line is, it is absolutely the case that we are really, really worried that this is going to be yet another Liberal slush fund that's going to be used for all kinds of other goals but not for what it was meant to do, which was to actually invest in greenhouse-gas-emission-reducing types of projects and initiatives. We're quite concerned about that because we know the track record of this government. We know the track record of the Liberals.

Most importantly, it does need to be an effective system. It actually needs to work. It can't simply be more talk of targets—I think I already talked about targets earlier in my speech, Speaker. The last thing we need is the Liberal history of targets and reaching them and not reaching them being played over again with our cap-and-trade program. As we know, the Liberals put out targets like candy in a candy store but they never actually reach their targets; and then, the next thing you know, those targets just kind of slip away like they never existed in the first place, and we don't have any achievement. We don't have any forward movement on some of the most important issues in our province, some of the most important things that are facing families.

If they do the same thing with the climate change plan, if they do the same thing with the cap-and-trade plan and set targets that are just there as baubles in the window for people to look at, but they are not actually committed to reaching those targets and reducing our carbon footprint here in the province of Ontario, then shame on them. New Democrats will not support a cap-and-trade plan that does not seriously—seriously—tackle climate change here in the province of Ontario. Those are the things we need to see. We need to see transparency, we need to see fairness and we need to see effectiveness in this cap-and-trade plan, and thus far, we are not confident—we are not confident—that the Liberals have met those measures.

Dans la lutte contre le changement climatique, nous avons besoin d'un plan d'action qui soit juste, transparent et efficace.

But that's not what's in this budget. The budget was another missed opportunity to do the right thing, Speaker. On top of all of that, on top of ignoring the basics and missing real opportunities, buried deep in this budget we see that the Liberals will force most Ontario seniors to pay nearly twice as much for their prescription drugs, starting this summer—seniors who are already struggling to keep on the heat, struggling to keep the lights on, struggling to put food on the table. The Premier calls them affluent seniors. Seniors earning \$19,500 a year—she calls them affluent. Talk about an out-of-touch Premier. Talk about an out-of-touch government. If ever there was evidence that the Premier and the Liberal government are out of touch with reality, with the reality that faces most people in this province, then this budget is it and their wrong-headed decision on prescription drugs is it.

Ever since I read that in the budget I've been thinking a lot about what it means for Grace. Grace is a senior whom I met at one of our community meetings on the Liberal sell-off of Hydro One. Grace lives in a co-op housing complex here in Toronto. I think she told me that she lives on a fixed income of about \$25,000 a year; she isn't rich by any means and she certainly would not categorize herself as affluent. When we met, she was worried. She was worried about her hydro bill. She came to a meeting about the Liberal sell-off of Hydro One. But now the Liberals want to add to Grace's worries and force seniors like her to grapple with higher drug costs, too. If she's anything like the average senior, Grace is going to need at least eight different medications this year. She's going to have to fill some of those prescriptions every couple of weeks. And now, starting this summer, the cost of her annual deductible is going to jump by 70% and she's going to pay more each and every time that she fills one of those prescriptions.

I've always believed that the most important thing that a leader can do, or someone who calls themselves a leader can do, is to put herself in somebody else's shoes. That's what I try to do, Speaker. I know that is what New Democrats try to do. I try to think of what higher drug costs will really mean to the lives of Ontario seniors, and I know it means that seniors are going to miss meals to pinch pennies. They're going to turn off the heat when they need it most, and they will skip the very medications that keep them healthy and out of hospital.

Worst of all, forcing most seniors to pay more for drugs undermines the principle at the very heart of public health care. That's what I find so stunning, so shameful about this Liberal government who talked a good game, who had their Minister of Health talking a great game about national pharmacare seven or eight months ago. I wonder why that was; maybe there was a federal election happening at the time. This Liberal Minister of Health said he was going to lead the charge for a national pharmacare program for the people of Ontario and the

people of Canada; he was going to call all the health ministers together, gather them all like little chickens and put together a national pharmacare program for the people of Canada and the people of Ontario.

In this budget, the changes this Liberal government was barrelling ahead with, and may still barrel ahead with, to increase the cost of prescription drugs for seniors are going backwards. It is the opposite of the principle of pharmacare; it is the opposite of the principle of universality. The principle of universal access to care is not what this government believes in. They showed it clearly in the budget. That principle says that regardless of who you are, regardless of your income, regardless of your age, you should have access to the medications you need, just like you should have access to the other health care services you need, whether it's a hospital, a doctor, a community health clinic or surgery. That's the principle, that's what universal health care is and that's what a pharmacare program would look like.

So it is shocking that the Liberals once again talk a good game when it comes to saying something that helps them politically, that helps them with their political fortunes, because that's all they care about. They talk that good game, and then they turn around and stick it to seniors in their budget. They do exactly the opposite, in their budget, of what they say publicly when they are trying to get votes or trying to get help for their friends who are running in an election. That's what this Liberal government is all about, Speaker: It's more about what's good for the Liberal Party, whether it's provincial or federal, than it is about what is good for the people of Ontario. They've been in office far too long, Speaker. They have lost their way. They have seriously lost their way. It's all about them, and not about the people.

The bottom line, Speaker, is that the principles of universality, the principles of a pharmacare program are the principles that our health care system in this country was built on. Those are the principles that seniors actually fought for when it comes to the establishment of our health care system in this country. It's an important principle and it's a principle that New Democrats will stand for every single day, day in and day out, unlike the Liberal Party in Ontario.

That is the principle we should be building pharmacare on, not clawing back drug coverage for the people who need it most. Seniors like Grace simply cannot afford anyone taking advantage of them, especially not their government. Seniors cannot afford to have their government try to take advantage of them like the Liberals did in this budget.

Speaker, the bottom line is that the Premier could have made much better choices, but once again, the Liberals chose not to: on jobs, on fighting climate change in a way that actually works and on protecting the basics like health care and our kids' schools. Now more than ever, we can see two distinct visions for the future of this province. There's one view—the Premier's view and the Liberal view—that is far, far removed from the challenges of struggling families, young parents and seniors. It is completely out of touch for the people of Ontario.

0930

Then there's our view, Speaker, the view that New Democrats, the NDP caucus and I, share. We believe as New Democrats that we have the potential to create a more fair, more equal and more prosperous future for all Ontarians—all Ontarians—not just the chosen Liberal few, where we actually tackle inequality and where we close the growing gap in this province—the gaps that are growing and have been growing for the last dozen years under the Liberal watch.

The Premier could have made much better choices. Instead, this budget has the wrong priorities and does little or nothing to help the vast majority of Ontarians. Instead, the Premier is selling off Hydro One to private investors, against the wish of Ontarians. She's continuing to underfund Ontario's hospitals; she's making more cuts to our kids' classrooms, cutting the services that people rely on, to the tune of \$1.2 billion; and doubling the cost of medication for seniors. All of this while doing virtually nothing to reduce wait times for home care, doing virtually nothing to improve access to long-term care, doing virtually nothing to improve the quality of care that seniors receive, doing virtually nothing to address the challenges facing northern or rural Ontario and doing exactly nothing, zero, for child care. Those are the choices that this Liberal Premier has made.

Despite a lot of lofty talk over the last four years, very little has changed under this Premier. In fact, many things have gotten worse. Her top priority, unfortunately, always seems to be—always seems to be—helping out the Liberal Party rather than helping Ontarians, rather than helping Ontario families. It's always about what's good for the Liberals, what gives them more votes, what gives them more power, what gives them more opportunity. That's what it's all about for them. That's what we've come to after a dozen years of Liberals in office here in Ontario.

This budget was a missed opportunity, and it shows Ontarians how out of touch this government has become, how out of touch the Premier, her cabinet and her MPPs are with the people's priorities. Speaker, Ontarians deserve so much better than that. Ontarians deserve a Premier and a government that is committed to tackling and taking on inequality and providing real opportunity for all Ontarians, not just the ones that actually help the Liberal Party to reach its goals, but ones that actually help Ontario reach our goals: to have a province that's more equal, to have a province that's thriving, to have a province where more people share in the opportunity and the prosperity that Ontario can create. But that's not what it's all about for this Liberal Party; that's not what it's about for this Liberal Premier.

We should be able to make sure that people have opportunity and hope regardless of where you live in this province or who you are. If you don't have a pipeline to the Liberals, you should still be able to do okay in Ontario. You should still be able to have your priorities put forward by your government. You should have the basics, at least, covered off by your government, things

like health care, education, jobs—the basics. But those things aren't on the agenda of our Premier in this province. The thing on the agenda of our Premier in this province and her team is exactly that: her and her team. That's what we've come to in this province. It's very sad and it's very disappointing; and more and more people are telling me, as I travel the province, how disappointed they are, how disillusioned they are, how unhappy they are. They thought things were going to be different with Kathleen Wynne. She told them it was going to be different, but it's more of the same—and, in fact, it's worse.

New Democrats are committed, though. We are committed to providing a government that actually will build a province in which every single person can succeed, in which the basics are taken care of and in which we can be proud of our health care system; of our education system; of the jobs that are created; and of the care that we take for our most vulnerable and for our seniors. That's what New Democrats are all about. That's the kind of government we would run in this province.

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

Ms. Catherine Fife: It's always a pleasure to stand in my place and bring the voices of the people of Kitchener–Waterloo to the Legislature. Quite honestly, I feel responsible in this position that I hold as the finance critic to actually bring the voices of Ontarians, the people that we heard across this province throughout the budget consultations, to this place, to this debate, because the people's voices and their priorities and what they need to see from a government is not contained in this budget document; it is not.

On Monday, I was doing a tour in Kitchener and in Brantford. I wanted to go out and speak to the people, the seniors in this province, who quite honestly were side-swiped. They were sidelined. They didn't see this coming, this change in the deductible for their prescription medication. They didn't know that the rules of engagement were seriously going to shift away from them and away from, really, fairness on the prescription issue. Those voices need to be heard by this government.

Yesterday, when I asked the question of the finance minister about this change—particularly as it was International Women's Day and particularly as this change and the shift in policy is going to significantly impact senior women in the province of Ontario. I know that for a fact because I went out and I talked to them.

We were at the Seniors' Resource Centre in Brantford. There was a pharmacist at the table as well, and she said, "Well, this threshold will increase access, so they don't have to pay the deductible." We have no issue with this. What we have an issue with is that this government almost doubled the cost of the deductible for those making \$19,000 and over. The women who were sitting around the table were completely shocked by this change. This is not what they ever expected from the government, because they are already struggling day in and day out. Sharon, for instance, said, "What else can they do to us?"

That's what this government needs to hear. They need to hear the genuine concern. The women, particularly

around this table yesterday, felt completely vulnerable. But at the end of the meeting, they were angry and they were mad. You know, Mr. Speaker, you don't want to mess with seniors who get a bee in their bonnet and who see a basic injustice happening to them.

This Premier said that she's going to lead from the activist centre. We should thank her because she's creating a growing number of senior activists in the province of Ontario, and they're going to show up in this place. They're signing these petitions and they're working in their communities and they're raising their voices because they know that it is fundamentally is unfair that you, without consultation, double the cost of their deductible, increase their copayments and, for some reason, you get to decide, this government gets to decide, who is affluent and who is not. That, for us, is such a strong indicator as to how big the disconnect is that this Liberal government has with the people of this province.

As I mentioned, these seniors did not see their priorities reflected in this budget. Harry, who came to the pharmacy in Kitchener, shared a story with us which I think every MPP needs to hear because it goes back to the health care piece. Harry said, "Listen, my wife was frail for 10 years," and he subsidized her long-term care to the tune of \$100,000. Do you know why, Mr. Speaker? It was because she received only 16 minutes of care in the morning and 16 minutes of care at night, and she needed a lot of assistance. He personally could not do it, so he actually had to hire somebody to come in and help him do it. That is the state of long-term care in the province of Ontario.

Harry—God love Harry—is dedicated now. He's going to fight the good fight. He's going to stand up to this government. He's going door to door in his neighbourhood. He's getting signatures for the petition, and he's going to come to Queen's Park. He wants to actually see this in action.

0940

To your credit, you've lit a fire of activism for the seniors, and they're not going to take it anymore. I'm proud to have been part of that round table, and they were so grateful somebody was listening to them. That's essentially what they said, but there was definitely heart-breaking moments. It takes such courage for seniors to share the reality of their lives, because they're proud people.

Jean said to us, "You know, this is going to mean the difference between me eating, heating and getting medication. I just don't know if I can take it anymore." She said this in front of the media who were there, who were taking pictures. She's got nothing left to lose, so she's willing to fight the good fight. And we're willing to fight the good fight.

Ironically, this government is out now consulting on this change. Normally what happens is that you consult first, you listen first, you pay attention to the people, you address the problem, and then you make a change. Not this government—nope, not this government.

Interjection.

Ms. Catherine Fife: There are some words I could use, but I wouldn't right now. It would be unparliamentary and I would not want to do that.

They're catching up to their own announcements. They were even catching up to their own announcements on the so-called free tuition. We, of course, support increased access for students to go to post-secondary institutions, because it has become harder and harder for them to do so in the province of Ontario. Since 2003, tuition has doubled under this government.

Yesterday, when we met with the members from OCUFA and talked about the conditions that are currently the reality on our university campuses—huge class numbers and more part-time faculty—it seems that this government is just content to say, "Look at this: We're going to do free tuition for this group of people. Just focus over here. Don't look at the real issues that are the reality for our post-secondary education institutions."

We heard that in the north, when we were on the budget consultation tour. Northern colleges and universities said, "You know what? It's good that you gave us a little bit of mental health money. We really need it. We need some funding for our First Nations students. That transition is really difficult and we want to make sure they're successful. But we don't have a roof. We need a roof. We need some funding for capital, so we can plan."

That's what I brought to those round tables: that the disconnect for this budget is that this government followed a flawed process. I think it's the first time in the history of the province that the government went out to seven locations, two of them here in Toronto, went through the process of listening and asking questions and being engaged, got on the plane, drove to places and spent a good deal of time together, and then—we just finalized the report. The finance committee just finished their report that we're going to give to the finance minister, which is supposed to inform this budget.

I shared this with the seniors yesterday, and they saw right through it. It is the height of arrogance and entitlement. We have never seen that under any government. One lady told me, "You need to hold the powerful accountable." I wrote it on my budget document: "Hold the powerful accountable," because that's where the power is, and when power becomes so entrenched in their own priorities, in their own value system, even though they're elected to serve the people of this province, that is when a democracy is undermined, Mr. Speaker, and that is what we see.

This is why this budget is so—we can't support this budget. We can't support this budget, because there are so many flaws. It was a flawed process. It doesn't honour the democracy of this province.

When I go through this budget and reflect on what we heard, one of the strongest moments was actually in Hamilton. It was really interesting to see the leaders' engagement with the minister responsible for child poverty, because there's such a vast difference of opinion on this issue. But when we heard that there is the equivalent of 270 classrooms of children who use food banks in Hamil-

ton, that's a serious stat that should leave us all breathless, because in 2016 we have the solutions for child poverty. Because it was International Women's Day yesterday, I feel compelled to say that when you raise women out of poverty, their children also follow.

When this Premier was first elected, she said she was going to use research and evidence-based decision-making; she was going to bypass that partisan route. She was going to put policies and legislation in place which were proven to be effective—you'll remember this, Mr. Speaker. The evidence in 2016 on the value of early learning in care: It cannot be disputed.

Charles Pascal, who did the original report for this government, made a recommendation of using the current infrastructure in the province of Ontario, which are our schools. He recommended building a seamless day of child care. People have already invested in those schools, the current infrastructure is already there, so you actually build programming around a school. Of course, you can't build programming around a school when those schools are closing, and we see those schools closing all over the province. His recommendation was to build that seamless day, use the current infrastructure, stabilize those school-aged child care situations around the community hub and then stabilize the zero to 3.8. This plan would have revolutionized child care in the province of Ontario, but this government backed away from it.

In Waterloo region, I have to tell you, when I was chair of the school board, we stayed to the plan. We now have almost 2,000 child care spaces, at no cost to the taxpayer. It's based on a user fee. It's a not-for-profit model. It builds on before-and-after programming around the day. Almost every family who attends these schools has a choice of child care, at no cost to the taxpayer, because the user fee is a not-for-profit model. The more students who come into the school, the cost of the child care goes down. Pascal had it right; the Liberals had it wrong when they backed away from it.

The reality for child care in the province of Ontario today is that we have a patchwork, broken framework where this government often quotes full-day kindergarten as a solution. People in the province of Ontario do not work from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m.; they just don't. Despite the fact that now—what's that new word?—we have contemporary—

Interjection: Contemporary mobile employment.

Ms. Catherine Fife: Contemporary mobile workers. Language is so important, isn't it, Mr. Speaker? We can "broaden the ownership"; we can "modernize." People need to see right through the language of this government. When you follow the money, as the finance critic for the PC Party and I do on a regular basis, you can see the real priorities of this government. Quite honestly, the people of this province do not see their priorities reflected in this budget.

Child care: What a shock for us to not see any new money. What is happening in the province of Ontario is that the private sector—corporations—have moved into Ontario. This government, by default, by not having a

plan, by not having a strategy, has opened the door for corporations, and they seem content to have big-box child care corporations manage the system. They're even willing to give them subsidies to do so instead of building a truly universal child care system that's affordable and accessible.

When I look at this budget through a gender lens—and I think that in 2016 we're starting to do that more and more—I see the patchwork of systems to deal with violence against women. Last night, our leader and some of our members were at an event that was honouring the front-line activists and the front-line workers who deal day in and day out with violence against women, particularly partner violence. They were honoured for their work. What a difficult job it is, because they've been fighting upstream for so many years. What amazing, resilient women. This was called WomanACT; it was the first time they've had these awards.

Before they started the awards, they went through a list of all the women who have died in Toronto through partner violence. If this government or any minister on that side of the House saw that video and read those names out loud to honour those women, then you would not be reducing the Partner Assault Response Program in the province of Ontario; you just wouldn't, because this program worked.

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To hear the Attorney General respond to the questions from our critic on this issue is heartbreaking, but it also is so frustrating, because they're content to water it down. Just like with child care, like the coalition said, they are content to race to the bottom.

Ontarians deserve better, Mr. Speaker. They deserve better. They deserve a program that will actually partner with male partners—and other partners, quite honestly—to ensure relationships that are healthy in the province of Ontario, so we don't have to build more shelters and we don't have to develop more hostels where women can seek shelter with their children. Women bring their children with them, and we often forget that.

The other missing piece in this budget is any sort of comprehensive housing strategy. Anybody who has been looking at poverty and trying to address it comprehensively understands that there are some key components to addressing it. Housing would be one of those issues. We're supposed to get some sort of a plan later this spring on housing, but the municipal affairs ministry saw a \$20-million cut. It's hard to understand how municipalities across the province, particularly in the north—I have to say, the state of northern housing is alarming. In some areas it's at a crisis. For them to do a \$20-million cut to that issue—I don't understand how housing cannot be a priority when (1) it does create jobs and (2) it does stabilize the economy. All of the research demonstrates that when you have a model of delivering housing in a responsible and equitable way, then those people who are actually so marginalized in our society find a way to be stabilized.

Kitchener-Waterloo is a fairly affluent riding, but we are going to see two homes closed this week. OneROOF

has 10 youths with acute needs. They have acute mental health issues and addiction issues, and I've asked the minister for some bridge funding to get us through to this announcement. We've been waiting for this announcement for a long time, but these 10 youths are actually going to be out on the streets. There's a cost of keeping them in a house where they get support and where they're safe and where they're receiving some assistance; and there's a huge cost for them to be back on the street.

Where is the compassion? It begs the question: Who really is in charge in this government? Because when we see the disconnect from the real lived experiences and the stories that Ontarians chose to share with this government around affordability of life, around housing, around child care, around health care and mental health needs, and to see that truly not reflected in this document begs the question: Why are we here?

We are here, very clearly, in our position as New Democrats to hold this government to account and try to bring the real voices of Ontarians to this debate. Listening to our leader, Andrea Horwath, and listening to the members who have had a chance to speak to this budget, all of our communities have real issues that actually have some creative solutions.

For instance, we saw the 1% increase to health care in this budget after four years of hospital freezes across the province. We heard the impact of those freezes across the province, from Windsor to Thunder Bay to here in Toronto. But there were delegations who came to us and made submissions, like Barry Hunt from Class1. He has developed a UV technology to address infections in hospitals. That's a smart investment.

When you look at the stats as to how many people contract a disease when they're in a hospital and faced with serious infections, instead of an ounce of prevention, instead of investing in a good Ontario company and ensuring that infection does not take over our hospital systems—because we have had serious shutdowns of whole wards of hospitals; the cost of that is huge. Why not be smart about this? Why not make the initial investment in a responsible way?

Invest Ottawa had an amazing idea to draw private sector investment, to incentivize investment in innovation. That's not reflected in this budget in a meaningful way. Little tokens—it's a bit of a teaser in this budget; right? The seniors I met with yesterday in Brantford said, "Well, is this a robbing-Peter-to-pay-Paul kind of budget?" And then one of the other ladies said, "No, it's a robbing poor Peter to pay poor Paul." They see right through it.

The cap-and-trade bill: I think our leader really did address this in a significant way. For us, we want to see an effective program. Our critic has been very consistent on this. Consistency matters in this place, as you've recently discovered. For us, the issue of fairness comes to the forefront as well. When this program was rolled out in California, the large emitters were included in the program at the onset, as you would expect. Yet this government is going to give a pass for a number of large

emitters right at the beginning. Now, it's shocking because everyone talks about this crisis and that we need to accelerate this cap-and-trade plan and that it needs to be effective. Yet the strategy fails to build any of those issues, one of fairness and one of transparency. You can't blame us for being a little suspicious and a little worried about the transparency issue, because we have issues with the Trillium Trust, as it was designed.

While this government seems to be content with rolling out these ideas, if you will, our job, as the official opposition—as the opposition; we are not official—is to pull back those layers and expose the weaknesses in that plan and hopefully then inform the strategy going forward. The most important thing for us on the cap-and-trade is (1) that it works, (2) that there's transparency and (3) that the government build some fairness into that. I don't think that's too much for the people of this province to expect, quite honestly.

The last point I want to address is really on jobs and the priorities of this government as they disconnect with this budget. This budget missed its targets on job creation. This budget missed this government's targets on GDP growth, on employment growth and on business investment. Even though the Auditor General has come out and criticized this government for the way that they allocate granting funds to companies—you'll remember, Mr. Speaker, that she highlighted the fact that 80% of the grants that were distributed were done so by invitation only, not through a public RFP process. That doesn't instill confidence.

I think that the economy, as it's moving ahead right now—

Hon. Brad Duguid: It's working really well.

Ms. Catherine Fife: Maybe it's working really well for your friends, but it doesn't instill confidence because when other companies see how this government is working and how you actually have to get in that door—you need to be invited into that door to access that money—that undermines the confidence in the economy of the province of Ontario, and it's a huge injustice.

The last thing I want to mention is that the privatization agenda of this government has accelerated. It's hard for us even to keep track of it. When the AG revealed the fact that road maintenance contracts were given to a certain number of companies, the MTO issued fines for those companies because they weren't doing the work. Do you know why they were not doing the work? Because profit was the driver. This government didn't even take the time to collect the fines. That shows you who their primary interest is.

Meanwhile, in this budget it says you're going to review the clawback of social assistance. We welcome that clawback change. The minister said she's going to take a whole year to consult on something that she's already admitted is wrong: taking \$280 away from the poorest, most marginalized women in the province of Ontario and taking a whole year to study it. Meanwhile, you can sell off Hydro One in 10 months.

The disconnect is mind-boggling. How can this government figure out a way to claw back \$40 or \$50 from

the poorest women in the province of Ontario and their children—talking out of one side of their mouth about poverty reduction—and then fail to actually do their due diligence around the privatization of road maintenance in the province of Ontario?

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This government has lost its way. This government is not paying attention to the people of this province. People see this, though; they see it. They see it for what it is.

We cannot support this budget. It is contradictory in nature. It is not reflective of the voices of the real people of this province. It was designed on a flawed process. It's a flawed budget. We will not be supporting it.

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

Hon. David Orazietti: It's a pleasure to rise in the House today to speak to the budget bill, Bill 173. I may be sharing my time with the Minister of Economic Development, Employment and Infrastructure as well.

I want to respond to the member opposite from Kitchener–Waterloo as well as the leader of the third party, because they left out a lot of important information. Ironically enough, they fail to recognize the countless benefits for Ontarians that are presented in this budget. Being as selective as they've been, I think I have an obligation to help inform Ontarians of the important measures that we're taking, the important steps that we're taking in the budget, and the reasons why we would ask all members in this House to support the budget bill.

First of all, let's talk a little bit about the financial side very quickly. We are on track to balance our budget. We faced one of the most serious economic recessions in the history of this province, and we're on track to balance the budget. In addition, that is not coming at the expense of important investments that we're making for Ontarians, and we're going to talk about those as well for the next few minutes.

Let's talk about the important infrastructure investments that we're making all over Ontario. I haven't heard any members opposite talk about infrastructure dollars that they don't want in their communities, that they don't want to see invested. We get questions repeatedly in the Legislature about spending more money in various ridings all over Ontario for a variety of projects.

We've got the largest investment in the history of the province: \$137 billion over the next 10 years. Some \$300 million is going to the Ontario Community Infrastructure Fund for small, rural and northern communities—I know in northern Ontario this is very important to many communities; I know it's important to my community in my riding of Sault Ste. Marie—as well as a specific allotment for Connecting Links, those roadways and highways that are provincial highways that go through communities, where 75% of the traffic is really provincial traffic and not local. There is a fund to help support those communities that are small, northern and rural that don't have the resources to help pay for the infrastructure that they need. We're increasing that fund to \$30 million—another good reason to be supporting the budget.

Expanded GO services as well: We'll talk a little bit about that. Infrastructure for schools: \$11 billion for schools. There's \$12 billion for hospitals.

I know the Minister of Economic Development, Employment and Infrastructure will perhaps want to highlight the \$400-million Business Growth Initiative to help create jobs in the province, with a \$30-million investment going to the global export strategy.

There are countless programs to help support economic development and job creation in this province, and we are leading the way. I certainly commend the leader for his leadership in that area.

Let's talk a little bit about health care spending in Ontario because there has been some misinformation as of late around the health care spending in the province. I have been highlighting this in my own riding through various communications in our media to highlight the fact that every year that we have been in government, the Ministry of Health budget has increased. It has not gone down for a single year: \$50.8 billion, another \$1 billion for health care, a 1% increase in hospital-based budget funding—that's \$345 million for operating expenses. I know the hospitals are pleased about that.

When we talk about investments that we're making in health care, we can also include \$130 million for expanded cancer care and a 5% increase for home care funding. This is very important. Members opposite talk about the importance of services at home. They continually bring examples of individuals who have these concerns, and here we are on this side, Speaker, putting money into the budget in these areas. We would hope that the members opposite would support that, including, as a start—this is another area—the free shingles vaccine, which will help to reduce—it's a pocketbook expense: \$170 as an out-of-pocket expense, covered now by the province moving forward.

Let's talk about some of the other investments. I know that if the members opposite have spent any time talking to the hospice associations across the province, they would know that the \$75-million investment that's taking that spending up to \$155 million going forward is money well spent. I know the hospice in our community is very excited about that. This is a program that our government began, and began funding, and continued to reinvest in. But the members opposite are somewhat out of touch when it comes to those particular issues and don't understand that that's another very good reason why they should be supporting the budget.

Let's talk about autism services: \$333 million in expanded support for children with autism. We talk about support for children in the province; this is something the opposition have raised. We're putting more money in the budget for this as well, Speaker—another great reason to support the budget.

Affordable housing: I heard the member opposite talk about affordable housing. What do we have? Some \$178 million for affordable housing—another positive reason to support the investment in the budget.

Social assistance rate increases: another 1.5%. Special needs increases: \$17.8 million.

I want to talk about something that is very important to our government and, I know, to all members of the Legislature: ending violence against indigenous women and girls across Ontario. We have invested \$100 million and will be helping to support and place workers in First Nation communities throughout Ontario to end violence against women and aboriginal girls in the province of Ontario. This is generational violence, long-standing, and we need the resources in the budget that will help to reduce and ultimately end violence against aboriginal women and girls in this province. We would call on the members opposite to support the budget, again, for another good reason.

Making life easier for Ontarians: certainly eliminating the \$30 fee for Drive Clean; capping hospital parking fees—we talked about this—another positive initiative over the next three years. We announced back in January that we would be making this investment and helping to offset these types of costs for everyday Ontarians who use these services. We think that is another example of an important program.

When it comes to investments for students—when we talk about students being our future and young people being our future, we need to demonstrate that by supporting them in every way possible. One of the other areas where we're making some huge investments, in addition to creating, over the term of our government, approximately 200,000 additional spaces in post-secondary education, is making very substantive investments in student aid and loans for students—I believe the most generous in the country when it comes to these types of investments.

In the budget, we're proposing to create a coordinated, streamlined, simple, upfront grant that's fully integrated. It makes it easier for parents and students to navigate the system. This upfront grant will ensure that families in Ontario with a combined income of \$50,000 or lower will have essentially free tuition in the province of Ontario. We think that is a way to break down barriers, to create accessibility, to have all young people in the province of Ontario reach their full potential.

As someone who taught for 10 years in Sault Ste. Marie and in the Sault Ste. Marie area, I know how important educational opportunities are to young people in this province. I'm very, very pleased to see this in the budget and to know that the feedback through the consultation process that took place right across the province is getting the results Ontarians want to see.

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We can talk about that as well, Speaker, because I know that the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs came to Sault Ste. Marie and heard from representatives in our community: heard from our hospice representative, Theresa Mudge, who is excited about the hospice investments; heard from the college president at Sault College, who's happy about the investments in post-secondary; and heard from Ron Gagnon, the CEO of the Sault Area Hospital, who's happy with the base budget increase.

When the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs came to my community in Sault Ste. Marie and listened to the local representatives and the local community leaders, the results that are in the budget bear out the fact that we were listening to and the committee was listening to the types of comments, the concerns, the areas of investment and those priorities that residents—certainly in my riding and I know ridings throughout Ontario—provided their feedback on and we heard from. I'm really pleased with those investments.

Speaker, in addition: In relation to the tuition piece that's in the budget, it's going to make tuition more affordable for middle-income families. More than 50% of students from families with incomes of \$83,000 or less will receive non-repayable grants in excess of the average college or university tuition, and no students will receive less through the Ontario Student Grant than they are currently eligible to receive through the Ontario tuition grant. We think that's great news. That is great news for the future of this province; it's great news for young people in this province. In addition, we're going to be supporting mature students more broadly than we have in the past when it comes to these types of investments.

While the members opposite continue to express their concerns and look at some of the areas that they believe have not been supported to the extent that they would like them supported, they completely dismiss all of the other benefits and all of the other investments that we have made—

Interjection.

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

Hon. David Oraziotti: —in infrastructure and health care, education, autism services, and ending violence against women. Speaker, it is a lengthy list.

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Kitchener–Waterloo didn't hear me?

Hon. David Oraziotti: I appreciate that, Speaker. Thank you very much.

The lengthy list that is in the budget, and the investments—so we're not only on track to balance the budget and take responsible steps when it comes to the fiscal challenges that we face in this province because we know that the interest that we are paying to service the debt is eroding our ability to further invest in the services and the priorities that we, as Ontarians, all want to see. That is problematic, so we need to address that. We can't simply ignore that.

While some members, perhaps, in this Legislature would like to simply say, "Let's ignore that and let's just open the vault," so to speak, and spend on whatever the item might be, I think we've reached a very pragmatic budget here. We have landed on some very important priorities that, from the numerous consultations that were conducted in 13 different cities with more than 700 individuals, with town halls reaching more than 52,000 Ontarians with over 500 written submissions—the extent

of the budget consultations, both with the Minister of Finance, the standing committee and I know that individual members held in their ridings really helped to shape the budget. We listened to Ontarians. What you'll find in the budget, as a result of that input and feedback from Ontarians, are the very important pieces we all are concerned about seeing invested in in the budget.

As I say, Speaker, the members might choose to dismiss the budget because there are a couple of items perhaps that they feel we have not invested in as fully as they would have liked to in the budget, but by and large, I know that Ontarians across the province are pleased with the countless areas of investment that we are making through the various ministries of government and in programs and priorities that they have specifically taken the time to come to these sessions and to provide their input on.

I'm going to encourage all members of the Legislature to support this budget and support Bill 173.

With that, Speaker, I'm going to turn the balance of the time over, for the remaining few minutes, to our Minister of Economic Development, Employment and Infrastructure.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Thank you, but unfortunately, it is 10:15.

Debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): This House stands recessed until 10:30 this morning.

The House recessed from 1015 to 1030.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Just as a courtesy, I'm going to remind members, because it looks like we have quite a few guests: Let's keep it in the vein we intended, please.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Today is a great day because there are so many people here from Nepean–Carleton. I would like to welcome those slot workers from the Rideau Carleton Raceway, whom I'm proud to support.

We also have some Catholic school board trustees here. I would be remiss not to point out Spencer Warren from my constituency, and also a family friend of ours from the Cornwall area, Todd Lalonde. It's wonderful to see them here. I hope we welcome them.

Mr. Paul Miller: It is my privilege to introduce Bishop Douglas Crosby from the Roman Catholic Diocese of Hamilton, and also Pat Daly, chair of the Hamilton–Wentworth Catholic District School Board. Welcome.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I'm pleased to welcome to the House student representatives from the Canadian Federation of Students–Ontario. They're here this week for their annual lobby week. CFSO and student leaders across the province are really very important partners with our government. I really appreciate the work that they've done with us on sexual violence and, most recently, on our transformation of the OSAP system in the budget.

Mrs. Gila Martow: I'm pleased to welcome Brian Gerskup, a constituent from Thornhill, who's here today for the Information Technology Association of Canada digital health day. Welcome, Brian.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: It doesn't happen very often, but all the way from Timmins is Colleen Landers, who's with the English Catholic board and also a very good friend. Welcome to our Legislature.

Mr. Grant Crack: I'd like to introduce members of the Friends and Advocates for Catholic Education who are present in the gallery this morning. This group includes the Ontario bishops' council, led by His Eminence Cardinal Collins; representatives of the Ontario English Catholic Teachers Association; and representatives of the Ontario Catholic School Trustees' Association. They'll be meeting with MPPs throughout the day and will be hosting a reception at 5 p.m. in the legislative dining room this afternoon. Welcome to Queen's Park, everyone.

And hi, Todd Lalonde. Welcome.

Mr. Bill Walker: It's my pleasure to welcome—

Applause.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock. Now behave.

The member from Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound.

Mr. Bill Walker: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to introduce Joshua Palmer, Emma Palmer and their mom, Patty Naylor. I'll be having lunch with them in the legislative dining room. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Ms. Cindy Forster: I'd like to welcome our guests, employees of Ontario Lottery and Gaming from the Rideau slots, as well as PSAC members that are here today for question period.

Hon. James J. Bradley: Our page captain today is Sarah Mateus, and her father, Carolipo Mateus, is with us today in the gallery. Welcome.

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: I'm pleased to welcome Bev Eckensweiler. She's here representing the Bruce–Grey Catholic District School Board today.

Hon. Liz Sandals: I'd like to welcome a number of people who are guests today from Guelph, beginning with His Eminence Cardinal Collins, who is actually originally from Guelph; the chair of the Wellington Catholic school board, Marino Gazzola; and our page Ryan Eggens has his father, Michael Eggens, and his grandmother Patricia Eggens with us this morning.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: It's my great honour to welcome the Archbishop of Ottawa, Terrence Prendergast, to the Legislature. Welcome.

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I'm pleased to rise today to welcome Zack Engle, who is in the gallery today. He's originally from the great riding of Oxford, and we're happy to have him here with us today. Welcome, Zack.

Hon. Reza Moridi: It's a great pleasure to welcome my colleague Sally Mosavat, from my constituency office, who is visiting Queen's Park today.

Mr. Jim McDonnell: I'm proud to welcome Archbishop Prendergast this morning, along with Todd Lalonde from the eastern Ontario Catholic school board.

Mr. Harinder S. Takhar: I am pleased to introduce Thomas Thomas. He is the vice-chair of the Dufferin Catholic school board and is also a constituent of mine.

Mr. Han Dong: I'm here to introduce and welcome Akio Maroon. Akio is a constituent of Trinity–Spadina and a recipient of the 2016 Leading Women/Leading Girls Building Communities recognition certificate.

She is here today and joined by her friends Sasha Ruel, Emilie Ruel, Kai Cole, Desmond Cole, Freyelle Menal Mehari, Jasnina Misir, Elizabeth Adekur-Carlson and Nicole McFadden. Welcome to you all.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: I'd like to introduce members from the Information Technology Association of Canada—or ITAC—representing some of the leading companies in the ICT industry, who are here at Queen's Park today for their Digital Health Day. Welcome.

Mr. Granville Anderson: I'm pleased to welcome Michelle Griepsma, who is chair of the Peterborough Victoria Northumberland and Clarington Catholic District School Board, as well as a number of other trustees, who are former colleagues of mine. Welcome.

Hon. Bill Mauro: I notice, in the members' east gallery, that Bishop Fred Colli from the Diocese of Thunder Bay is here. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: I also want to welcome a very good friend of mine, Larry Rousseau, who is in the House. He represents the Public Service Alliance of Canada, National Capital Region. Welcome, Larry, and to all our friends.

Hon. Michael Coteau: I'd like to introduce my friend Abid Malik, who is way up there in the top, right behind us. He's a former staffer here at Queen's Park.

Hon. Michael Gravelle: I certainly want to welcome Bishop Colli as well. I look forward to seeing him later today.

I also want to introduce Roman Jakubowski, who is the president of the Lakehead University Student Union. I think he's up here somewhere. There he is. Welcome. Good to see you.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): We also have with us today, in the Speaker's gallery, His Excellency Agustín García-López, the ambassador of Mexico, and His Excellency Nicolás Lloreda, the ambassador of Colombia. Please join me in welcoming them to the House.

Also in the Speaker's gallery, would you please join me in welcoming the family of the late Lorne Howard Maeck, MPP for Parry Sound during the 29th, 30th and 31st Parliaments, who are seated in the Speaker's gallery: son Doug and his wife, Ada; and daughter Janice Whitter, and her husband, Steve.

Also in the Speaker's gallery, for support, are Mr. David Warner, Speaker during the 35th Parliament, and Mr. Steve Gilchrist, MPP for Scarborough East during the 36th and 37th Parliaments, and also chairman of the Former Parliamentarians—or president; I'm not sure which one.

Of course, we also have, from Parry Sound, the former MPP for Parry Sound in the 32nd, 33rd, 34th, 35th and 36th Parliaments; Dufferin–Peel–Wellington–Grey and

Parry Sound–Muskoka in the 37th; and former Premier of the province of Ontario, 38th Parliament, Mr. Ernie Eves.

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LORNE MAECK

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

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: Mr. Speaker, I believe you will find that we have unanimous consent to pay tribute to Lorne Howard Maeck, former member for Parry Sound, with a representative from each caucus speaking for up to five minutes.

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

Mr. Taras Natyshak: It is indeed an honour and a privilege to rise today on behalf of the Ontario NDP to pay tribute to the life of late MPP Lorne Maeck.

In his book *The Greatest Generation*, Tom Brokaw provides a glimpse into the lives of a cohort of men and women who came of age during the Great Depression, who stepped up to defend our freedoms in the Second World War and returned to post-war communities to set up as citizen-leaders who helped shape the institutions and lay the foundations of the communities which we are all proud to call home.

Brokaw sums up the men and women of this era as follows: "It may be historically premature to judge the greatness of a whole generation, but indisputably, there are common traits that cannot be denied. It is a generation that, by and large, made no demands of homage from those who followed and prospered economically, politically and culturally because of its sacrifices. It is a generation of towering achievement and modest demeanour, a legacy of their formative years when they were participants in and witness to sacrifices of the highest order. They know how many of the best of their generation didn't make it to their early 20s, how many brilliant scientists, teachers, spiritual and business leaders, politicians and artists were lost in the ravages of the greatest war the world has seen."

Although the book doesn't mention Lorne Maeck by name, a look at Lorne's life makes it clear that he is exactly the type of person Brokaw brings to life in his words. I never had the privilege of meeting Lorne, and I look forward to the remarks from the member from Parry Sound–Muskoka and the member from St. Catharines for their more personal recollections of the type of man he was. One of the highlights of the tributes is that they remind us of the humanity of this place, something that is unfortunately lost in the cut and thrust of partisan politics.

In reading up on Lorne in preparation for today, the articles and the accounts of his professional life and contributions to his community give us a good look into what made this man a special person. Though clearly a proud son of northern Ontario and the distinct traditions

of this special part of the province, the story of Lorne's origins resonate with people from all walks of life, from Timmins to Windsor and from Thunder Bay to Ottawa.

A second-generation Canadian of humble beginnings, Lorne understood that his opportunities were not just the product of hard work—and we know that he worked hard—but were also the result of incredible efforts and sacrifices from those who came before him. You see, Speaker, the common thread in Lorne's vocations and careers was that serving others was what mattered most.

Lorne's first memorable act on the road to a lifetime of public service came at age 17, when he left high school to enlist in the Royal Canadian Air Force during World War II. Upon returning home, Lorne joined the OPP, rising to the ranks of detective over the course of his policing career. Even Lorne's many business ventures encapsulated this idea of service, including the ownership of a gas station, a furniture store and a bus company.

Throughout his many successful careers, Lorne was never far from public service and political life, entering the public arena as councillor and then reeve in his hometown of South River prior to securing the nomination of the PC Party for the riding of Parry Sound. While the Conservatives boast a proud tradition in the Parry Sound area with PC representation dating back decades, Lorne's success as MPP follows the same pattern as the rest of his life: work hard, build on the opportunities provided by others and create new opportunities for those who have followed in your footsteps, just as others had done for you.

Lorne was no shoo-in for the post. He wasn't even the favourite for the PC nomination, but he understood something that is an essential lesson for those who aspire to public office. His success didn't come through the many accolades and accomplishments he brought to his candidacy but was established by his commitment to being the best possible representative he could for his community.

Although Lorne won the seat in his first try, his success was cemented by the work he did during the early stages of his tenure as MPP, building a reputation as an effective advocate for the people of Parry Sound. As a result, his efforts as their voice at Queen's Park didn't go unnoticed at home and a tough first election turned into a string of successes that helped him remain a fixture at Queen's Park in spite of successive minority governments in the mid-1970s.

Through all of his success at Queen's Park, where he served as parliamentary assistant, chief government whip and, finally, as the Minister of Revenue—back when we had revenue in this place, Speaker—Lorne never forgot that his primary responsibility was to be the voice of his riding, going as far as to open his home to people of his community to address their concerns, even as a cabinet minister, with his kitchen as a de facto constituency office.

At this time, I'd like to say a special thanks to Lorne's family members who join us here today. The life of an MPP has its challenges, but they're not carried only by the person whose name is on the ballot. Often, it is our

families who make the greatest sacrifices in order for us to have the privilege of serving our province. Thank you for sharing Lorne with us.

In the end, Lorne's career as MPP followed the same arc that marked much of his life. He took the opportunity that had been given to him and, through his hard work and dedication, used it to create opportunities for those who followed, including his successor who joins us here today and who also narrowly won the nomination and then followed Lorne's commitment to his community and service to build an effective career of his own.

The legacy that Lorne leaves isn't just about political achievements but serves as a testament to politics at its best: When a representative's longevity isn't determined by the party we represent but is a result of our commitment to the communities we have the privilege of serving. We would all do well to follow in his footsteps in this regard.

Lorne, thank you for your service to northern Ontario and to the people of this province.

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

Hon. James J. Bradley: I have a bit of an advantage, perhaps, over some of the House in that I actually served with many of the people who are being eulogized these days, including Lorne Maeck. I do recall that I served with the fathers of John Yakabuski and Norm Miller, both of whom knew Lorne Maeck extremely well and would testify to the fact that he was an extremely dedicated member of this Legislature and also a nice guy. The two don't always go together; sometimes people are nice people and members of the Legislature and sometimes it doesn't happen that way. But Lorne Maeck was both; I want to assure you of that.

I was particularly intrigued by a story he was telling about his humble beginnings. It goes to the fact that we in Canada—and we in Ontario, if we bring it to the provincial level—have an opportunity, even from very humble beginnings, to be able to serve in high public office. He rose to the category of being a cabinet minister as well as chief government whip, two, if not prestigious, extremely important areas of endeavour for a government.

Here's a description of the home, and this is quoting Lorne: "We were a very poor family. Our furniture was all homemade. There were no chairs, just benches made from slab wood we got at the sawmills. We had beds that were oat bags sewed together to the size of the bed and filled with beaver grass." Now that is truly a humble beginning. Of course, there were eight children in the family at the time, so there was a lot of competition for the attention of the parents.

You know that there were early struggles that took place, but Lorne overcame those. He was a successful businessman, as has been mentioned by the representative of the New Democratic Party. He also served in our air force, of course, which we thank him for very much, and in the Ontario Provincial Police, as well as running local businesses and being part of the community and adding to the economic benefit of the community.

Somebody who learned a lot from him is in the gallery today, and that's a person who was affectionately known as "Landslide Ernie," and that is former Premier of the province of Ontario Ernie Eves, who, after Lorne vacated his seat, rolled to victory by six votes. That's a clear indication of how much Lorne was liked and the reputation he had established. It would be difficult to follow in those footsteps, but nevertheless, I'm sure that the successor to Lorne Maeck who sits in the Speaker's gallery now learned a lot from him and was a strong supporter of his.

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It's also interesting to note, because we who serve in the Legislature today—and again I go back to Mr. Yakabuski and Mr. Miller. If you go back far enough, there were not constituency offices, so people came to the house. So Lorne Maeck, after spending some time in Toronto with the Legislature in session, would go home and there would be people in the kitchen, the living room and down in the basement who would be receiving their assistance from the member himself or herself in those days, compared to today where we have constituency offices that have computers, that have all kinds of electronic equipment and have some significant staff. And that is progress. It's a result, I think, of the Camp commission that that happened. So it was very challenging in those days, and it meant even more onus on the family to be part of the operation of a so-called constituency office that you would have in the community.

Second, it's interesting to note that those who serve in rural communities, and many in the House do today, recognize how much of a challenge that is, because you're representing not just one constituency. I have the privilege, as an urban member, of representing three quarters of the city of St. Catharines. So I have one city I deal with. I have school boards in this particular case: a Catholic board, a public board, a French board, a French Catholic and a French Protestant board. So what we have is a different circumstance as urban members.

The people who are in rural areas have to travel an awful lot, and so we often kid them about the mileage claims that they happen to have because they travel so much, but they genuinely do travel a lot. Some of them actually encounter OPP officers who are sitting there with, shall we say, cameras trying to determine the speed of those individuals. So they're much more vulnerable. I really think that serving a rural constituency—a remote constituency, particularly—is very difficult. So we're extremely grateful for him.

The last thing I want to mention is, because other things will be mentioned, that he was the chief government whip in a minority parliament, and that was a very difficult thing to do. I liked his comment that during his political career he moved from parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Natural Resources, and then talked about the fact that to make the minority situation work, Maeck and the House leader would sit down with their counterparts from the Liberal and New Democratic parties to go through the legislation and budgets line by line to reach

compromises. Remember, it was a little bit rocky from 1975 to 1977, because minority government was a new experience for all members who were sitting at that time. I have to say that if I've ever observed minority government in this province, it worked best from 1977 to 1981, and we can thank Lorne Maeck and those who worked with him for making it a success at that time, making it operate as the people of this province would want.

We're very grateful once again to yet another family who have shared a member of their family with all the people of the province of Ontario and in particular with their constituency. Once again, our province is a better place because Lorne Maeck has served in this Legislature.

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

Mr. Norm Miller: It's my pleasure today to pay tribute to Lorne Howard Maeck, former MPP for the great riding of Parry Sound. But first, let me welcome members of the family that have made it here to the Legislature today: son Doug Maeck and his wife Ada, and daughter Janice and husband Steve Whitter. Son Peter and his wife Sharon are not able to be here today but, Mr. Speaker, would like a copy of the proceedings, as you are always so good at providing.

I'm so happy that the former member for Parry Sound and Parry Sound–Muskoka and former Premier of the province, Ernie Eves, has taken the time to be here. Thank you, Ernie. It's always great to see Steve Gilchrist, who's head of the retired parliamentarians, taking the time to be here, and former Speaker Warner, who also comes to many of these proceedings.

I had the pleasure of knowing Lorne Maeck personally. In fact, I have a great picture in my home that I treasure, with three Parry Sound MPPs: Lorne Maeck, Ernie Eves and me. It was taken at the 2005 funeral of long-time former MPP Allister Johnston. And many of Lorne's family have been very helpful to me come election time. Niece Gail Maeck has very successfully run my election operations in South River for all of my elections since 2001. Gail and Les Maeck wanted to be here today, but they're away in someplace warmer today, unfortunately.

Lorne grew up in a tiny log cabin near South River, where his parents, Otto and Masilba, raised eight children. Lorne was the youngest of the family. In an interview with the *Almaguin News*, Lorne said, "We were a ... poor family. Our furniture was all homemade. There were no chairs, just benches made from slab wood we got at the sawmills. We had beds that were oat bags sewed together to the size of the bed and filled with beaver grass."

From these humble origins, Lorne went on to do so many things. He left high school at grade 10, served in the Royal Canadian Air Force in the Second World War as a wireless air gunner. On his return to Canada, he served in the Ontario Provincial Police, becoming a detective. He was a true entrepreneur. After the OPP, he went on to operate several different businesses, including a gas station, bus company and furniture store.

He started his political career on council and then as reeve of South River. When former MPP Allister Johnston retired, with encouragement from Johnston, Lorne decided to run for the PC nomination. It was a tough battle for the nomination. That included the reeve of Burk's Falls, Stan Darling, who went on to be the MP for Parry Sound; Dr. Jack MacKay of Parry Sound; and Royce Macklaim of Parry Sound. Lorne won, but there were some hard feelings on the west side of Parry Sound that someone from east Parry Sound had won again. In fact, Royce Macklaim ran as an independent in the general election—I went and checked the records—and he came in second, with 25% of the vote. When I checked the poll results for the west Parry Sound area, Macklaim soundly won most of the polls around the town of Parry Sound.

After the election, Lorne Maeck reached out to Ernie Eves, a young lawyer from the town of Parry Sound, to make peace and get support from the town of Parry Sound. When I spoke with former Premier Eves, he told me that Lorne Maeck was one of the reasons he got involved in politics. Ernie ended up joining the Parry Sound riding association and served with a guy by the name of Mike Harris. At the time, the Parry Sound riding included Nipissing township and stretched all the way to Mattawa. So Lorne had a pretty good riding association, with two volunteers who would both go on to be Premier of Ontario.

Son Doug told me that he has a photo with young Mike, Ernie and Lorne. In fact, Ernie Eves and Mike Harris met while serving on the Parry Sound PC riding association. Ernie went on to serve as Lorne's association president and campaign manager.

I spoke with former Premier Mike Harris, who confirmed that he was volunteering both at the Nipissing and Parry Sound riding associations, as his home was in one riding and his business was in the other. He said that many people in Nipissing would travel down to South River to meet with Lorne, who was a government member, at his home with their provincial issues, as Nipissing adopted Lorne as their member. He said Lorne always had time for him and other people from Nipissing. Former Premier Harris said he would have liked to be here today, but he is out of the country.

Lorne went on to serve Queen's Park on many different committees and select committees as parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Natural Resources. Then in 1976, he was appointed the chief government whip by Premier William Davis.

Lorne had great respect for the Premier and told me that he really enjoyed the job of whip, especially because it gave him close access to Premier Davis. Son Doug told me that Lorne was in awe of Premier Davis, the only person he referred to as "the boss."

I spoke with former Premier Davis, who said that Lorne was a very decent individual, committed to his constituency, liked by everybody, and that he was very conscious of other people. He talked about how Lorne enjoyed his passion of woodworking in retirement, and

that Lorne would send a gift of his handiwork to Davis each year at Christmas.

Lorne went on to be Minister of Revenue from 1978 until his retirement in 1981.

Lorne was very easygoing and not afraid to get his hands dirty and help out. Niece Gail Maeck told me the story of when Premier Bill Davis was coming to visit their campaign office in South River. Lorne showed up in his jeans and his plaid shirt to help get things ready for the visit. Some guy came in and started giving Lorne orders. Lorne complied at first, before saying, "And who are you?" The guy replied, "I happen to be security for the Premier." Lorne replied, "Do you know the Minister of Revenue?" The guy replied, "Well, not personally." Lorne replied, "Well, I happen to be him, so stop ordering me around."

Lorne loved to play music. He played guitar and sang, and had a band called the Minister of Revenue and His Political Poll Cats, with band members Bob Maeck, Pete Bray and Ross Gutjahr, and they would play at fundraising events for skating clubs, hockey teams and other community events.

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Former Premier Eves told me, "Lorne Maeck was a thoroughly decent guy," "as honest as the day is long," and "one of the reason I went into politics." He said that people loved him and that he took a genuine interest in their affairs.

He told me the story of when Lorne was Minister of Revenue. Two government assessors had visited a property to assess it, and one returned later to steal firewood from the property. Lorne learned of this and wanted the assessor fired immediately. When he learned that a minister couldn't just fire people, he instead offered a promotion to him, sent him to the Far North and asked him to report back in two years. The assessor then quit. I should mention that Ernie Eves did a fine job delivering the eulogy at Lorne Maeck's funeral in 2014.

Lorne retired from politics before the 1981 election, and in a recent interview with the *Almaguin News* he talked about returning to the riding after the week at Queen's Park:

"Maybe that was the hardest part. By the time you got home you were played out and there were all these people waiting for you," said Maeck, noting his kitchen and living room on Marie Street in South River would be lined with constituents waiting for their man to return to speak with them." As was mentioned, that was prior to constituency offices.

He went on to say, "Being an MPP is a difficult thing. All the problems that really affect people come from the province.

"By the time I had my 10 years in I was tired. I don't think I could have gone another four years. I'm the sort of guy who takes his problems to bed with him."

Lorne was married to his lovely wife, Ivy, for 62 years. In fact, concerns for her health were part of the reason he decided to retire from politics.

Thank you to the family of Lorne Howard Maeck for his service to the people of Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I thank the members for their thoughtful, kind and heartfelt comments. To the family: Thank you for the gift of Lorne. As you've heard, the affection with which he is held in this House is a reflection of him, and our respects to the families of all members—that it takes to be an MPP.

As has been mentioned, we will provide you with a copy of Hansard and a DVD to show you the tributes for your memory. Thank you again.

ORAL QUESTIONS

CORRECTIONAL FACILITIES

Mr. Patrick Brown: My question is for the Premier. Repeatedly in this House, we have warned about a crisis in corrections. The state of our correctional facilities is endangering inmates and officers who work there. Because of this government's negligence, the crisis has moved into our communities and is threatening the safety of Ontario families.

Today, there was a shocking report in the *Globe and Mail* that says that due to persistent lockdowns at Ontario jails, convicted offenders are regularly getting extra credit for pre-trial custody. In one case, a convicted offender has had his sentence for a firearms offence reduced by three months because of the appalling conditions he had to endure at the Toronto South Detention Centre.

Mr. Speaker, will the Premier tell Ontarians why she's giving gun-toting criminals a get-out-of-jail-free pass?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I know that the minister will want to comment on the reforms that are taking place as we speak. We've been very clear that we know that it is an extremely high priority for all Ontarians that we have safety inside of our correctional facilities and on the streets of this province, so we're moving forward with a Strategy for a Safer Ontario. We understand that there needs to be transformation within the system, and that goes to safety for the people who work within the facilities and safety for the inmates.

I would also say that it is very important to us that we move more to a system where there is rehabilitation, that we put back some of the supports that are needed. We know that there are literacy issues in our facilities. We know that there are mental health concerns. We need to—

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

Mr. Patrick Brown: Back to the Premier: The Premier has not addressed the shocking *Globe and Mail* report that convicted criminals are getting out early because of the conditions of provincial facilities.

This winter, I went up and visited the—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Order.

Mr. Patrick Brown: —Thunder Bay jail. I found the conditions shocking. I challenge—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock. I've said "order" once to hopefully stop it; if it continues, I'll go to the individual.

Finish, please.

Mr. Patrick Brown: I challenge the Premier to visit the provincial correctional facility in Thunder Bay. If that is too far, my challenge today is, will you visit the Toronto South Detention Centre?

The reality is, the conditions in these provincial facilities are allowing convicted criminals to get out early.

Will the Premier commit to visiting one of the correctional facilities? No matter how close or how far it is, will the Premier commit to visiting—yes or no? I don't want to hear about previous visits two years ago for ribbon cuttings. Will you visit and see the conditions today?

Interjections.

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

First, I'd like to ask the government side to try to stop doing my job. I'll take care of it.

Second of all, just a gentle reminder, please: to the Chair. You can still ask the same question, but just ask it to me.

Premier.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Mr. Speaker, as I have told this House many times, I have visited corrections facilities and I will do so again. But the most important thing is that we understand what the transformations are that are necessary, what are the better rehabilitation and—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): It goes both ways. The member from Dufferin—Caledon.

Premier.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Mr. Speaker, I understand that the party opposite has a totally different philosophy on this front than we do. I understand that the Leader of the Opposition sat in a government that actually believed that more incarceration, that bigger jails, that more—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Member from Leeds—Grenville.

Carry on.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: —that more people in jail was the way to go.

I actually believe that having facilities that support rehabilitation, that provide activities, that provide mental health, that provide rehabilitative services—that that's what needs to happen in our system. That's—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Member from Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke.

Final supplementary?

Mr. Patrick Brown: Back to the Premier: This crisis in corrections is going to escalate. The reality is, this is not about rehabilitation; this is about the conditions of the facilities. The mayor of Thunder Bay called the correctional facility up there a rathole. The conditions in these jails are allowing convicted criminals to get out early. That's what I'm hoping the Premier will address.

What I have heard from correctional officers across the province is that the conditions are deplorable. What we've seen, Mr. Speaker, is a loophole that is allowing convicted criminals to get out early.

Will the Premier commit that she will close this loophole? Will the Premier commit that she will stand up for public safety, stand up for Ontario families and make sure that our communities are safe?

Interjections.

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

Deputy House leader, come to order.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: Thank you very much for the opportunity to respond.

The loophole that the member opposite is talking about is a federal piece of legislation that he voted for. That's the loophole that he's talking about. The problem that we are facing in correctional services today in terms of overcapacity—which is true across the country—is a result—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Everybody calm down.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): All right. That will do.

A reminder: provincial policy. Thank you.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: The challenges in terms of capacity that have been faced by correctional services in Ontario and across the country—and I have had the chance to speak with other ministers as well—is a direct result of the dumb-on-crime policies that the previous Harper government brought into place that had a significant impact. That is why, as the Premier mentioned, we are very much focused on transformation, to ensure that we are creating opportunities for inmates to get better rehabilitation and reintegration. We are taking steps to hire more correctional—

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

New question.

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HEALTH CARE FUNDING

Mr. Patrick Brown: The Royal Victoria hospital provides some of the best patient care in the province by some of the best, smartest, sharpest physicians, nurses and health practitioners in our province.

What came out yesterday was that the RVH announced that they now have to cut \$8 million, despite the fact that the Minister of Health says there are no cuts. The reality is, this is yet another example. It was announced yesterday that 30 full-time jobs, along with 24 jobs that were being advertised, are gone, for a total of 56 previous positions—gone, wiped out, in the service of health care.

Why does the Premier continue to cut health care to make up for her waste and mismanagement?

Interjections.

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

Premier.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Mr. Speaker, I know that the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care is going to want to comment on the Royal Victoria hospital.

The base funding for that hospital has increased about 103% since 2003—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Leeds-Grenville, second time.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: —and our budget, as the Leader of the Opposition might know, has actually increased funding to hospitals: \$345 million, and overall, \$1 billion more for health care as a result of the budget that we just brought in.

We know how critical health care is to the people of Ontario. We also know that hospitals are a central part of that service to people in the province, which is why we continue year over year to increase funding to the hospitals.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Patrick Brown: Mr. Speaker, back to the Premier: The Liberals have said they're going to invest in health care. What we're seeing is a very different story.

In a conference call for elected officials, RVH debriefed the public servants of Simcoe county and said that, based on the new formula, RVH gets \$500,000 in new funding but has to cut \$8 million. It is unacceptable. Some 1,700 new patients last year: There are more patients, there is more health care need, and yet the hospital has to cut because of this government's mismanagement.

Why is this government not providing the Royal Victoria hospital with the tools to serve the growing population? Why are you cutting Royal Victoria hospital? Why are you cutting health care?

Interjections.

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

Premier.

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

Hon. Eric Hoskins: Mr. Speaker, I'm so proud of this hospital. This is a brand new hospital, completed in 2013. It doubled the capacity of what the previous hospital delivered. We've incorporated a cancer care program which is among the best anywhere.

I'm so proud of the member for Barrie, who has been such a strong advocate for this hospital, which resulted in the recently announced new cardiac care program that will be opening at Royal Victoria hospital in the foreseeable future.

I'm so proud of the staff, including the administration. They have balanced their budget for the last seven years running.

There will be no service cuts, Mr. Speaker. We've more than doubled the funding for this hospital. We have more than doubled the capacity through this new hos-

pital. This is a great news story. I don't know where the member is trying to go with this.

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

Mr. Patrick Brown: The reason that everyone in Simcoe county is livid with these \$8-million cuts is because this government is saying that they're going to invest—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock. Okay, we'll go to warnings—all sides.

Carry on.

Mr. Patrick Brown: Mr. Speaker, when this government says they're investing in health care, they have no credibility, because we see examples like this. The reality is, they can point—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Barrie is warned.

Mr. Patrick Brown: —to any page in the budget, but this is not what we're seeing on the front pages of newspapers across Ontario. The reality is, just look at Simcoe county: \$1 million that was just cut from the Simcoe county health unit. Georgian Bay General had \$5 million cut. They said there would be more services provided at RVH, and now they've cut RVH by \$8 million.

The government promises investments in long-term care, and now it came out today that they're cutting \$340,000 from long-term care in Simcoe county. The mayor of Barrie called this “downloading by stealth.”

Mr. Speaker, when will this Premier stop pretending that she's investing in health care?

Interjections.

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

The Minister of Health.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: Apart from the 28 hospitals that they closed when they were last in government—I know the Leader of the Opposition tried to do this with Georgian Bay, where he began fear-mongering, suggesting that a decision had been made to close the obstetrics unit at that hospital. In fact, that was absolutely false. There were recommendations. More than 100 proposals were put forward to the hospital in December. Among them, there is a whole series of efficiencies and improvements that can be made. That was one. It's among 100 proposals.

It's the same with RVH, with Royal Victoria hospital, doing a great, fantastic job. He needs to stop fear-mongering. In fact, he needs to start championing the hard work of this hospital, the people who work there, the front-line health care workers and the positive outcomes that we're seeing.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. I would hope that members know by now that testing my resolve is a bad mistake.

New question.

ONTARIO DRUG BENEFIT PROGRAM

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is for the Premier. Does the Premier believe in universal health care?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Yes, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock. Thank you.

Just to reinforce, we're on warnings. If you choose to ignore the Speaker, the Speaker won't ignore you.

Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: She should show it. In 2014, the health minister wrote an editorial in the *Globe and Mail*. He said, “While we need drug coverage to see better performance in our health system, pharmacare also speaks to the Canadian values of fairness and equity.”

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry is warned.

Finish, please.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: He wrote in the *Toronto Star* that pharmacare was “one of the most important steps we can take to rededicate ourselves to the principle of universal access to health care.”

Does the Premier share the belief that what Ontario needs is universal access to drug coverage?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Our Minister of Health and Long-Term Care has been an advocate and a leading voice across this country on the need for a pharmacare system. He is working with his colleagues across the country. He has been a very articulate advocate for pharmacare.

We all understand that we need to provide for people and make sure that more people have access to the medications that they need, particularly as new medications come online and also as the population ages—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Hamilton East–Stoney Creek is warned.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: —which is why, in our budget, we moved to take 170,000 seniors and make sure that they did not have any deductible that they would have to pay. That is exactly consistent with the belief that pharmacare is an important thing.

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Actions do speak louder than words. The Premier sent a public message when she signed her name to a call for pharmacare, but now that the TV cameras are off and we see the real plan, instead of giving more access to affordable medication to seniors who are struggling, seniors will see the cost of their medications nearly double. That's the fact. It's extremely disappointing when Ontarians hear the Premier talking about more drug coverage, but what they get in their real lives from this Liberal government is less coverage.

Can the Premier explain why her ministers are talking about universal care—why she talks about universal

care—but what we see is the exact opposite? It's not just New Democrats saying that. It is CARP saying that; seniors' organizations are saying that. Everybody recognizes it. Ontario seniors will see the cost of their medication nearly double. Is that universal pharmacare?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: We've had this exchange in a number of ways, for a number of days. I will say once again that our objective was to take those 173,000 seniors, to make sure that they didn't have to pay a deductible, because they were the most vulnerable.

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The second part of our initiative: There's a regulation out right now. We said if we didn't get that threshold right for people who are already paying a deductible and an increase on that deductible, we would look at it. I assume that groups like CARP and those organizations will be talking to us, will give us their input.

But the thrust of our initiative was to make sure that those 173,000 most vulnerable seniors will no longer have to pay a deductible, and that's exactly what will happen.

NORTHERN HEALTH SERVICES

Ms. Andrea Horwath: To the Premier: The reality is, their budget went in the opposite direction of universal pharmacare.

Speaker, there's nothing in this budget, either, for northern Ontario—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Question.

Ms. Andrea Horwath:—and no recognition of the unique challenges facing northerners—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Question.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Speaker, I already directed my question to the Premier. Perhaps you didn't hear me.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I trust the table, as well. Please direct.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Everything is more expensive in the north. People pay more for a litre of gas, for a carton of milk, for a dozen eggs. They pay more to heat their homes. And now a senior living on less than \$19,500 in northern Ontario is going to have to stretch every dollar even further. Does this Premier think that it is fair to nearly double the cost of medication for seniors in northern Ontario?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I have answered this question. I have said that the regulation on that particular aspect of our initiative is in the public realm for consultation, and we have said that we will look at that.

Mr. Speaker, the leader of the third party has said she is proud to vote against the budget that we just brought in. Let me just look at what that means. That means that this leader of the third party is proud to vote against transforming student assistance, which will mean free tuition for low-income families and more affordable tuition for middle-class families. She's proud to vote against taking action on climate change and investing cap-and-trade proceeds transparently into green projects

that reduce pollution. She's proud to vote against lowering hospital parking fees. She's proud to vote against improving services for children and youth with autism through a five-year \$330-million investment. She's proud to vote against all of those things.

Interjections.

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

Supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: I'm very proud to vote against a budget that grows inequality in this province, worsens our health care system, worsens our education system, doesn't create enough jobs for the people of this province and turns its back on universal pharmacare.

It's really clear that this Premier either doesn't understand the north or she doesn't care about the north.

The CEO of the Thunder Bay hospital says that people in Thunder Bay will see health cuts because the province's funding formula doesn't make sense in the north. He said, "We've seen a reduction in our budget of half a million dollars last year on that formula. I think it over-emphasizes population growth, so populations growing in southern Ontario tend to get more of that money than we do. That's a problem."

Why is the Premier ignoring the health care needs of the northern families in this province?

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

Hon. Eric Hoskins: Once again, Mr. Speaker, there seems to be a theme here. In fact, the theme might be a cardiac one, because just like I was talking about the new acute cardiac program that we're developing at Royal Victoria, we just announced recently, in the past months, a brand new cardiovascular surgery and vascular surgery program at Thunder Bay regional hospital. It's a single program; actually, in partnership with Toronto General Hospital—and I was there. I can't remember the number of times I've been to Thunder Bay regional hospital for announcements there, to meet with staff, front-line health care workers. There's incredible activity taking place—the research that's going on there that we're supporting, as well. It's a world-class health care centre that we're developing in partnership with the leadership in Thunder Bay, including the health leadership that's there. I would hope that the third party would recognize what we're developing there, which is so badly needed but so well deserved.

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: How out of touch this health minister is. The theme is the cuts to Ontario hospitals. That's what the theme is.

It's not just the Thunder Bay hospital. The Timmins hospital has been forced to cut \$35 million over the last three and a half years. The North Bay hospital CEO says, "This year has been challenging, and the next one is going to be even more so." And we know that nearly doubling drug costs is going to hit northern seniors as well, Speaker.

When will this Premier start listening to the needs of the north and making sure that northerners get fair access to the health care that they need?

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Eglinton–Lawrence is warned.

Minister.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: Mr. Speaker, I remain proud of the work that we're doing as a government in the north with our partners there throughout the health care system: the work that I referenced in Thunder Bay; the hospitals that we're renovating and building in the north as well; the fact that our 25 nurse-practitioner-led clinics that exist around the province—many of those are in the north. In fact, the first was in Sudbury.

If we want to talk about trends here, let's talk about the trend of them when they were in government, where they closed hundreds of mental health beds—13% of the mental health beds across this province were closed—when they delisted home care from OHIP coverage, and when they fired 3,000 nurses when they were in power. For that short period of time, the devastating impact that they had, which we've been rebuilding—and we've been rebuilding after the devastation of the PC Party as well.

I'm proud of our investments, including 345 million new dollars for hospitals across the province, a more than 2% increase this year.

ELECTORAL REFORM

Mr. Bill Walker: My question is for the Premier. This government has a history of cozying up to special interest groups and Liberal friends. Last June, the Premier committed to bringing in new rules for third-party-funded advertising, yet nothing has changed despite her electoral reform bill passing.

The Chief Electoral Officer, Greg Essensa, has repeatedly called for limiting advertising by special interest groups during election periods, yet his calls have been ignored.

Mr. Speaker, when will the Premier do the honourable thing and do what she personally committed to doing, which is to bring in meaningful third-party advertising reform?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I have been asked this question a number of times. I have said in the public realm that we are committed to not only bringing in changes in terms of third-party advertising, but also looking at political fundraising rules. We are doing that, Mr. Speaker. We will be bringing forth a plan. I look forward to support from the parties opposite.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

Mr. Bill Walker: Back to the Premier, Speaker: The Liberals won't fix a system where "fairness is distorted." Those were the Toronto Star's words, not mine.

The Chief Electoral Officer noted that Quebec, British Columbia, Alberta, New Brunswick and the federal government have all adopted controls over third-party advertising. As a matter of fact, Ontario remains the only

place where third parties do not face advertising spending or contribution limits. It's time we level the playing field; it's time for action.

Mr. Speaker, will the Premier take a break from her backroom meetings and take actual action to bring in real fairness and real reform to our system?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Mr. Speaker, we agree; we agree that there need to be changes. But I would just remind the member opposite that we actually are the party that has brought in changes. In 2007, third-party advertising rules—

Interjections.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: There were no rules before 2007. There were no rules at all, Mr. Speaker. We brought in rules in 2007.

I have committed to bringing in further enhancements. We will do that, Mr. Speaker.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Dufferin–Caledon is warned. I had a lot of choice.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: In addition to changes on third-party advertising, Mr. Speaker, we will be looking at political fundraising and we'll be bringing in a plan as well for that.

COLLECTIVE BARGAINING

Ms. Cindy Forster: My question is to the Minister of Finance. Some 124 workers from the Rideau Carleton Raceway are here with us today in the gallery. They're members of the Public Service Alliance of Canada. They've been locked out of work by the OLG, the Ontario Lottery and Gaming Corp., since just before Christmas, all because they rightly refused to have their decent pensions gutted from their collective agreements.

This government has been promising a secure income retirement through its ORPP for all Ontarians, while at the same time turning a blind eye to the OLG making cuts to their workers' superior pension plans. This is the height of hypocrisy.

Will the minister explain—

Interjections.

1130

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

Ms. Cindy Forster: Withdraw.

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

Ms. Cindy Forster: Will the minister explain why his Liberal government will allow the OLG to treat these workers and their families this way?

Hon. Charles Sousa: I appreciate the concerns of the individuals who have travelled here today overnight. It's a very difficult situation for them and their families. They are here in the gallery today, as mentioned, and I want them to know that I value their work and I think all of us in this House respect their rights.

We want everyone to be at their best. This ongoing labour disruption at the slots at Rideau is not easy for

anyone. I also respect the collective bargaining process that's under way and that mediators are involved. OLG says—and I believe they've had this discussion now—it is willing to go back to the bargaining table, and I remain hopeful that this matter will be resolved as soon as possible.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Cindy Forster: Well, that's interesting, because certainly the workers haven't heard that.

Let's be clear: The OLG is a crown corporation. It takes its marching orders from the government. We have these workers and their families here with us today. They have been out of work since before Christmas. They are without a job, they are without a paycheque, and the OLG has even cut their health benefits. We have workers here that need medications just to function every day, and they have not had any health benefits since the lockout—all of this under the Liberal government's watch.

Will the minister tell these 124 workers and their families who are here today why the Liberal government has done nothing to get the crown corporation back to the table and nothing to get these workers back to work?

Interjections.

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

Minister?

Hon. Charles Sousa: It's disappointing that the member opposite, from the NDP no less, is suggesting that we negotiate outside of the collective bargaining process. They themselves know fully well that that's the way it should occur. We respect that every employee should be treated fairly and respectfully, and it's appropriate not to negotiate now outside of the process.

Interjections.

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

Hon. Charles Sousa: I can confirm this: that in fact the issues in dispute are around wages and pensions. I recognize that. I also recognize that the OLG and others have made a number of proposals already that have been consistent with 17 others that they've ratified with the OPS, including the security services by OPSEU at the Rideau Carleton just last November. The conciliator by the Ministry of Labour has been placed. They have called a meeting as of last January. It's unfortunate that they didn't come to an agreement.

I am very hopeful, though, that they will get back to the bargaining table, where they should, to get this resolved. We recognize that that's important.

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

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): You'd better not look at me.

Member from Kingston and the Islands.

ONTARIO RETIREMENT PENSION PLAN

Ms. Sophie Kiwala: My question today is for the Associate Minister of Finance. Minister, I'm pleased that our government has consistently been in favour of enhan-

cing retirement security. I know that residents in my riding of Kingston and the Islands are pleased to see our government taking a leadership role on this issue.

Many people I have spoken to are concerned about their future and they recognize that too many Ontarians are not saving enough for retirement. The world of work is changing and a growing number of young workers no longer have access to a workplace pension plan.

I know the minister has made a lot of progress on the development and implementation of this important plan over the past several months. Mr. Speaker, through you to the minister, can you please highlight some of the ways that the government is helping people with retirement security through the ORPP?

Hon. Mitzie Hunter: I want to thank the very hard-working member from Kingston and the Islands for that question.

Over the past year, 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.

Study after study, including ones from Canada's major financial institutions like CIBC, RBC, BMO and Sun Life, has told us that many Canadians are not saving for retirement. The ORPP will address this challenge by ensuring that Ontario workers receive a predictable stream of income, indexed to inflation and paid for life. This means that future retirees will have more disposable income to spend in their neighbourhoods, supporting local businesses in their communities. The Conference Board of Canada was also clear that, accounting for all factors, consumers and the economy as a whole are better off under the ORPP.

We're showing leadership on this issue because we believe that after a lifetime of working, Ontarians deserve a dignified retirement.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Sophie Kiwala: Thank you to the minister for her response. I have heard some people refer to the Ontario Retirement Pension Plan incorrectly as a tax, or as a payroll tax. Some of these individuals who have used the term "tax" are sitting across the aisle with us today.

I've heard the minister tell the House that the ORPP is being designed to mirror the CPP. According to CARP, "The CPP is not run by the government and it's not a tax. Your CPP is an earned pension. CPP Investment Board (CPIB) manages the CPP at arm's length from all levels of government and makes independent investment decisions."

Mr. Speaker, can the minister please discuss this issue and further explain how a pension plan is different from a tax?

Hon. Mitzie Hunter: As the member suggested, there have been a number of individuals who incorrectly call pension plans a tax. In fact, it has been a common phrase used by members of the PC Party, both inside and outside this House. This is misleading. This is why I was pleased to hear the Leader of the Opposition flip-flop on his

position on this issue. On Monday, while defending yet another PC flip-flop, the leader clearly stated, “It’s not a tax if government doesn’t keep it. It’s not a tax if you give it back.”

We have been clear through legislation that all funds that are collected by the ORPP Administration Corp. will be held in trust for members. Similar to CPP, the ORPP will be administered at arm’s length from government. I hope the leader shared his new talking points with the members of his caucus so that they, too, are clear that pension plans are not a tax.

The ORPP would mean all Ontarians would have access to a secure retirement, not just ones fortunate enough to have—

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

COLLECTIVE BARGAINING

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: To the Premier: In 2012, her government embarked on a gaming modernization plan that cancelled the slots-at-the-racetrack program and attempted to expand casinos across Ontario, causing the deaths of thousands of horses and the loss of thousands of rural jobs.

In Ottawa, the Rideau Carleton Raceway was threatened with a downtown Ottawa casino. Only after major public backlash did the Liberals abandon that plan, or so I thought. Now over 100 slot workers at the RCR, who are underpaid compared to their counterparts across Ontario, are forced, literally, out into the Ottawa cold, locked out by the OLG. During the first weeks of this lockout, revenues from the slots at the Rideau Carleton were down \$1 million from the same quarter a year ago.

Is this a plan to starve the Rideau Carleton Raceway of its patrons so this government can finally build a downtown Ottawa casino, with the slots and the horse—

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

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Labour.

Hon. Kevin Daniel Flynn: I don’t think anybody in this House enjoys when they see a strike or a lockout. Ontario has got an excellent record in reaching settlements in this regard. Over 98% of agreements are reached around the collective bargaining. What we concentrate on is working with the parties to focus on a settlement that’s going to result in a fair collective agreement. That’s what we want to see in this circumstance. That’s what we’re working for at the Ministry of Labour. Nothing would please me more, and I’m sure nothing would please all members of this House more, than to see that agreement reached.

The way that agreement is reached is to bring people back to the table. I’m pleased to inform—I think I can expand a little bit more in the supplementary—that I’m actively engaged with the mediator in this regard. He’s reaching out to the parties as I speak.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: I’m going back to the Premier, because the motive of what they’re doing is to close

down the Rideau Carleton Raceway and put these people out of a job and put the rest of those horse people out of a job so they can bring down a downtown Ottawa casino.

First, the government attacked the rural roots of the people of Nepean–Carleton at a half-century-old race-track by eliminating their revenue-sharing agreement. Now the government is forcing these folks here today—its underpaid employees—out of work, and it has cost the OLG \$1 million. The OLG is the only gaming corporation in the entire world that goes out of its way to lose money. They are biting off their nose to spite their face.

I question the Premier again, and I would like a response for my constituents: Will the government recognize that it’s being unfair to its employees, or will the government continue to force out the Rideau Carleton Raceway and share their secret plan for an Ottawa—

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

1140

Interjections.

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

Minister?

Hon. Kevin Daniel Flynn: Speaker, I’m not sure it’s particularly helpful in this regard to try to solve the collective agreement in this House.

Each of the parties has a record. We know which party was the one that was trying to get rid of public service jobs during the last election. That was very clear.

We’re at a point right now where we have a group that is locked out and we have two parties that aren’t at the table. The role of the Ministry of Labour—and, I would think, the hope of everybody in this House—is that both sides will agree to return to that table to do the hard work, to make the tough choices that result in collective agreements that, at the end of it all, ensure that people have good, long-lasting, stable employment in the province of Ontario.

I don’t think there’s any sense in throwing stones about the motives behind this—

Interjection.

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

Wrap up, please.

Hon. Kevin Daniel Flynn: Clearly, Speaker, what we all should aspire to is to get these two parties back to the table, to ensure that they complete an agreement the way we have in 98% of the cases.

MINING INDUSTRY

Mr. Michael Mantha: My question is to the Minister of Northern Development and Mines.

Minister, this week is the annual prospectors’ and developers’ conference. Your ministry hosted a number of industry receptions with companies working in the province.

Last week, a report was released which states that Ontario is lagging on exploration permits. It went on to say that a quarter of industry respondents believed that

permit approval times had lengthened considerably in Ontario in the last 10 years. On the level of transparency in the approvals process—again, no surprise—Ontario's transparency ranks amongst the worst.

We are losing investment, we are losing companies and we are losing jobs with every passing minute. So my question to the minister is, why on earth is your government making the permit processing even longer and more frustrating?

Hon. Michael Gravelle: It was a tremendous week at the Prospectors and Developers Association of Canada conference and a very positive one in terms of the meetings that we had not just with companies but with indigenous leadership and the federal government.

As we move forward with our mineral development strategy, our goal is to remain the leader in sustainable mineral development all across the world. Certainly, in Ontario we are very proud of the fact that we are still number one in mineral exploration and mineral production. That's incredibly important to us.

In terms of your specific question, we are working as closely as we can, to be as open as we can, to move the plans and permits process forward, and we'll continue to do that in the best fashion that we can, working closely with industry.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

Mr. Michael Mantha: Minister, the industry reported that the province was slow and far behind other provinces with synchronizing permitting and industry milestones.

The criticisms have been abundant. The AG's report found that the government has spent \$13 million and has nothing to show for it. Cliffs said they had zero hope and that every investment made here was a disaster. Sources inside Noront indicate that they have threatened to suspend work. The Ontario Chamber of Commerce also reported a lack of investment in the Ring of Fire. First Nations leadership have publicly expressed concern that the provincial government is violating their agreement.

"Inclusion, investment, infrastructure—truth and reconciliation is the path forward." These were wise words, at the PDAC opening ceremony, from Regional Chief Day.

Minister, this is no longer a game of crying wolf. When will you show leadership with this file?

Interjections.

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

Minister?

Hon. Michael Gravelle: Mr. Speaker, again, we had an extraordinary relationship-building exercise with the Ring of Fire development; there's no doubt about it. The work that we're doing with the Matawa First Nations is unprecedented. The fact that we signed a regional framework agreement is unprecedented.

The work that we're doing, moving forward, is going to position us so that we are ready to move forward. The work we're doing with industry, whether it's with Noront Resources or any of the other companies that are related

to investment in the Ring of Fire, is absolutely moving forward in a positive way.

You can be as negative as you want to be. We're going to continue to work positively with all of our partners and stakeholders, including the industry, including First Nations, including the Métis Nation, and we are going to recognize that we can be the top mineral destination for mining around the world. That's our goal in moving forward with the Ring of Fire as well: a project that, when it comes to fruition, is going to be a huge economic benefit to so many people across the province of Ontario.

ONTARIO FILM AND TELEVISION INDUSTRY

Ms. Indira Naidoo-Harris: My question is for the Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport. I've always been passionate about the television, film and broadcasting industries. In fact, before getting into politics, I worked as a reporter, producer and anchor for several stations, including the CBC, CTV, TVO and OMNI, and worked on several documentary films.

As a former board member for the Reelworld Film Festival, I've seen first-hand how good storytelling and filmmaking can move us to action. TIFF, Reelworld and even the Milton Film Festival in my riding are just some of the wonderful festivals that provide Ontario filmmakers with a platform for their work. We have some amazing talent.

Mr. Speaker, can the Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport tell the House how our government is encouraging the development of our rapidly growing television and film sector?

Hon. Michael Coteau: I'd like to thank the MPP from Halton for her continued work and advocacy for our creative sector here in the province of Ontario. There's no question that this government is a proud supporter of the creative sector here in Ontario.

Yesterday we made some changes in the Interactive Digital Media Fund, and today we shared some great news with the sector. Ontario has had a great year. Ontario played a huge role at the Oscars, winning best picture for a film that was filmed here in Ontario. Of course, best actress went to an actress from the movie Room, which was co-produced here in the province of Ontario.

We know that there are TV productions that take place here, like Murdoch Mysteries, Suits, and Reign, and we'll continue to support our film and television sector through our budget to ensure that it continues to build on that sector here in the province of Ontario.

Mr. Speaker, TV and film—

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

Ms. Indira Naidoo-Harris: Thank you, Minister, for your hard work in this sector. In fact, I saw the films Spotlight and Room, and I was proud to discover that they were filmed right here in our province.

We know that the number one priority of our government is to grow the economy and create jobs for Ontarians, and we know that the film and television sectors are important and thriving industries in Ontario.

I'm pleased to hear from the minister that our budget and our continued investment in TV and film is leading to record-breaking GDP and job numbers. I'm proud our government is supporting this vital sector and the talented producers, directors, actors, cinematographers and industry experts living and working in our province.

Can the minister tell the members of this House more about our support for this important sector?

Hon. Michael Coteau: I was happy to announce today that TV and film tax credits attracted a record-breaking level of production in 2015, making it the best year for film and television in the history of this province.

The TV and film sector here in the province contributed over \$1.5 billion to our local economy, generating 4,500 new jobs here in Ontario. I know that we'll have continued growth here with continued support by the government. That means more local jobs, more economic growth and increased economic foreign investment.

For every actor in front of the camera, Mr. Speaker, there are a dozen carpenters, lighting technicians, sound, special effects, post-production—there are so many people involved in production, and we're proud as a government to support film and television here in the province of Ontario.

MUNICIPALITIES

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: My question is for the Attorney General. Two years ago, I introduced a private member's resolution to reform joint and several liability for municipalities. My motion received unanimous consent from MPPs of all parties—even Liberals—yet here we stand over two years later and the government has done absolutely nothing.

Municipalities' insurance premiums remain high. In fact, it was brought up again at last month's ROMA/OGRA conference. So I ask the minister: Why won't the government respect the will of municipalities across Ontario and respect the resolution passed in this House by all parties over two years ago?

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: To say that we have done nothing is not exactly correct, because there has been a lot of review that has been done. You know—

Mr. John Yakabuski: "Not exactly correct." You've done a little wee bit?

1150

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I know the member might want to withdraw that.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Withdraw.

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

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: There has been a lot of consultation that was done. You know what, Mr. Speaker? There was no support except from the insurance company and some of the municipalities.

So the legal organizations, those who represent those individuals who have been injured or who have a disability resulting from one of these injuries, were very much against any change in joint and several liability.

I will continue—

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

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: Speaker, the Liberals have turned their backs on municipalities. What a disgrace!

But if the minister won't help municipalities across the province, what about her own constituents? In 2008, there was a tragic incident in Ottawa where a drunk driver slammed into a bus. Because the bus driver was driving six kilometres over the speed limit and because he apparently picked the wrong moment to check his mirrors, the bus driver was found partially at fault. Now, Ottawa taxpayers are on the hook for \$2 million. This case represents municipalities' worst fears.

Here's my question: If other provinces and states can make sensible reforms to their system, what's stopping Ontario? Is it because the Liberals' so-called consultation sought input only from trial lawyers? Is it because they totally excluded insurers and municipalities?

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: As I said, Mr. Speaker, there was a wide consultation. The review of the consultation shows us that—what the opposition wants to do is to switch the burden from the municipality to the injured individual. On this side of the House, we don't agree with that.

So unless there is a suggestion that will not do that—I'm open to look at other proposals. But, so far, the proposal that came to us was to do exactly that: to shift the burden of the municipality to the injured individual. We're not ready to do that, and we're not going to do that.

ABORIGINAL HEALTH CARE

M^{me} France Gélinas: J'aimerais poser ma question à la première ministre.

Today marks two weeks since the Nishnawbe Aski Nation of Sioux Lookout and the Chiefs Committee on Health declared a health emergency for First Nations in Sioux Lookout and across the NAN territory. As Grand Chief Alvin Fiddler said, "Children are dying and lives are at risk."

Communities are in a state of crisis. Many First Nations lack the basics needed to deliver proper health care. As the declaration of emergency states, "People continually encounter the effects of federal and provincial jurisdictional squabbling leading to inequitable access to health care."

Chiefs are calling on all levels of government—and that includes this provincial government—to commit to immediate action to address this urgent crisis.

It has been two long weeks, Speaker. What has the Premier done to address the urgent health care crisis in the NAN territory?

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

Hon. Eric Hoskins: I appreciate the question, Mr. Speaker.

It is true that the NAN in the Sioux Lookout region issued this public health emergency statement. I think it was one day after—it might have even been the same day, Mr. Speaker—that I organized the conference call with Grand Chief Alvin Fiddler and with Regional Chief Isadore Day. In fact, there were quite a number of chiefs who were represented on the conference call with myself because I wanted, on a very urgent basis, to begin to address the valid concerns that they have raised through their call for support and help in health care.

They also emphasized the importance—which we, of course, agree with—of working closely with our federal partners; that all levels of government—our First Nations, the provincial government and the federal government—work together in a collaborative fashion to address the issues concerning public health and other health issues in an effective manner.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

M^{me} France Gélinas: An urgent health care crisis demands more than a phone call. The community in northwestern Ontario and across the NAN territories has suffered from inadequate health care access for decades, and the chiefs are clear: They don't want this to continue any longer. They are calling for immediate action by the government of Ontario, not phone calls. They want them to approve the long-term-care facility in Sioux Lookout. They want us—the government, you—to increase resources to support mental health and prevent suicide, and they want the government to comply with Jordan's Principle and make sure that children, in particular, have access to health care.

For too long, governments at all levels, including the provincial government, have failed to address the crisis in First Nations communities. These failures need to stop right now. Will the Premier take immediate action, not calls, to stop this First Nations crisis?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: Mr. Speaker, that immediate response and the conference call came one day after I addressed the annual health summit of our First Nations leadership and front-line health care workers, where I outlined our plan, going forward, to work with them. I had hoped—in fact, I'm surprised that it took her two weeks, and she hasn't done this privately with me either, to actually address this either publicly or privately, as it's such an important issue.

We're developing an action plan in response to every single issue that's referenced in their press release. It was informed further by that urgent and important phone call. We've committed to creating a process and an in-person meeting that will include federal Minister Jane Philpott. We're developing an action plan, but we're doing that in collaboration with our First Nations partners.

If she's unsure of the government's commitment to this, I suggest that she talk to the same First Nations leaders that I have, and I believe they will defend our resolve.

SENIORS

Mr. Joe Dickson: My question is for the minister responsible for seniors affairs. Ontario is currently home to approximately two million people over the age of 65, and over the next 25 years that number will more than double. As our minister knows, seniors play an active and important role in our province's communities and our economy. Recently, in the budget, this government proposed changes that will benefit seniors and assist them in living healthy and happy lives in their retirement years.

My question, through Mr. Speaker to the minister: Would this minister inform us in the House on recent items announced for seniors in the 1916 budget?

Hon. Mario Sergio: I want to thank the member from Ajax-Pickering.

I have to say that he is absolutely right. Last week, in 18-degree weather, the member was there, shivering, but doing his job representing the seniors, the people of Ajax-Pickering, and I have to congratulate him, because they were just groundbreaking another seniors building. I know what he's talking about, Speaker, and it's absolutely right.

Indeed, the 2016-17 budget ensures that our seniors have access to programs and services they need, such as—and this is important—\$250 million in home care and community care, an additional \$75 million over the next three years in community-based residential hospice and palliative care, and an additional \$10 million annually in support of our residents, helping them with dementia and other complex behavioural and neurological conditions.

Speaker, above all, 130,000 seniors will benefit when they go to visit, or they go to the hospital, from the 50% reduction in hospital parking. This is what we do—

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

Supplementary?

Mr. Joe Dickson: Mr. Speaker, perhaps at this time I should correct my year of record. Whatever I said, it was of course 2016. I'm like Panasonic: slightly ahead of my time.

I'd like to thank the minister for his response. I know that our government has a plan to create jobs and grow the economy, and we recognize that our greatest strength is our people. I'm pleased that we've allocated funding in the budget to ensure that our seniors have access to the programs and services they need, and I look forward to seeing so many citizens across this province and in my riding of Ajax-Pickering benefit from the 2016 budget. It's important that seniors remain healthy and independent for as long as possible, and feel safe and supported.

Question: Can the minister responsible for seniors' affairs please explain what is being proposed for the shingles vaccine?

1200

Hon. Mario Sergio: The member is right again: Our seniors want to live an engaged, active, and independent life as long as possible. The member is absolutely right again when he says that we want to create jobs. And

what's in the budget? Some \$160 billion to create 110,000 jobs—I think that's very important.

I have to say, Speaker—let me try and say this in a very nice way—that since the beginning, our Premier has been preaching with more fervour than an evangelical preacher about jobs and the economy. This is nothing new. But there is more in the budget. I have been after the Minister of Health, the Premier and the Minister of Finance to include the shingles vaccine for our seniors—

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

ANIMAL PROTECTION

Mr. Rick Nicholls: My question is to the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services: People in Chatham-Kent and around the province are outraged that there is an application before the court, to be heard tomorrow, to euthanize 21 dogs seized in a dog fighting operation in Tilbury. This has sparked an outpouring of support for the dogs and outrage towards the province.

The dogs rescued from Michael Vick's high-profile 2007 fighting ring have proven to the world that fighting dogs can be successfully rehabilitated. A Rhode Island woman who owns one of those 22 dogs saved from Michael Vick's estate, and who also runs a rescue for fighting dogs, has offered to lend her expertise to the province—free of charge—but has heard no response.

Why does the province think these dogs are different? Why don't they deserve a second chance?

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: The member is asking about a court process that is under way involving the OSPCA. We understand this is a very challenging issue, and many individuals and organizations are concerned. I'm sure the member knows that there is currently an application to the court by the OSPCA for permission to euthanize 21 of the 31 pit bull dogs seized from an alleged dog-fighting operation, citing risk for public safety. However, the remaining dogs are being rehabilitated for relocation outside the province.

Our government takes the care and protection of animals in Ontario very seriously, and we are proud to have high standards. But we have to be mindful that the OSPCA is an independent, charitable organization that provides a number of services, such as animal shelters, veterinary care and spay/neuter clinics. Contrary to public reports, the government of Ontario does not have legislative or regulatory authority to direct the OSPCA to take or not to take any action in this instance. This is a matter before the courts, and that's where it should be dealt with.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Rick Nicholls: Back to the minister: I own a rescue dog and I love him very dearly. Ontario's archaic animal laws are making this issue more complicated. The animal sanctuary Dog Tales has offered to help, begging the minister to grant a special designation so they can take these dogs in. They have taken dogs in that the province has deemed unadoptable before and they are willing

to do it again. They have even offered a forever home for any dogs that cannot be rehabilitated.

No stone should be left unturned. So, Speaker, to the minister: Will the minister take every possible step to save these dogs' lives and grant such a designation? Minister, save the dogs.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: I also have a rescue dog, which my family and I love very, very dearly. As I said earlier, the OSPCA is an independent, charitable organization that provides a number of services when it comes to the welfare of animals in our province. Additionally, the OSPCA Act, which is legislation of this Parliament, authorizes the OSPCA inspectors and agents to enforce any law pertaining to the welfare of animals. Police may also enforce these laws. As I said earlier, and I want to repeat, the government of Ontario does not have legislative or regulatory authority to direct the OSPCA to take—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Leeds-Grenville can turn his chair away from me after he hits, but it doesn't mean I don't hear you. We're very close to a vote, and I would love for him to be able to exercise that voting right.

Finish, please.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: Again, Speaker, the government does not have any authority to tell the OSPCA what to do or what not to do, or to exempt a private facility from the requirements of the Dog Owners' Liability Act for the purposes of transferring ownership of the dogs to such a facility.

VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member for Scarborough-Agincourt on a point of order.

Ms. Soo Wong: I want to welcome two American guests visiting the Legislature. Former Minnesota senator Jane Krentz and NCEL executive director Jeff Mauk are visiting Queen's Park today. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. Rick Nicholls: I'd like to introduce to the Legislature today two residents from the great riding of Chatham-Kent-Essex, Wayne and Jennifer Black. Welcome to Queen's Park.

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 173, An Act to implement Budget measures and to enact or amend various statutes.

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

The division bells rang from 1206 to 1211.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Would all members please take their seats?

On Tuesday, March 8, 2016, Mr. Naqvi moved government notice of motion number 63. Mr. Clark then moved that the motion be amended as follows:

“That the paragraph beginning”—

Interjection: Dispense.

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

We are now dealing with Mr. Clark's amendment to the motion. All those in favour, please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Arnott, Ted	Jones, Sylvia	Nicholls, Rick
Bailey, Robert	MacLaren, Jack	Pettapiece, Randy
Barrett, Toby	MacLeod, Lisa	Scott, Laurie
Brown, Patrick	Martow, Gila	Smith, Todd
Clark, Steve	McDonell, Jim	Thompson, Lisa M.
Coe, Lorne	McNaughton, Monte	Walker, Bill
Hillier, Randy	Miller, Norm	Wilson, Jim
Hudak, Tim	Munro, Julia	Yakabuski, John

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

Nays

Albanese, Laura	Forster, Cindy	Meilleur, Madeleine
Anderson, Granville	Fraser, John	Milczyn, Peter Z.
Baker, Yvan	French, Jennifer K.	Miller, Paul
Balkissoon, Bas	Gates, Wayne	Moridi, Reza
Ballard, Chris	Gélinas, France	Murray, Glen R.
Berardinetti, Lorenzo	Gravelle, Michael	Naidoo-Harris, Indira
Bisson, Gilles	Hatfield, Percy	Naqvi, Yasir
Bradley, James J.	Hoggarth, Ann	Oraziotti, David
Chan, Michael	Hoskins, Eric	Qaadri, Shafiq
Chiarelli, Bob	Hunter, Mitzi	Rinaldi, Lou
Colle, Mike	Jaczek, Helena	Sandals, Liz
Coteau, Michael	Kiwala, Sophie	Sattler, Peggy
Crack, Grant	Lalonde, Marie-France	Sergio, Mario
Damerla, Dipika	MacCharles, Tracy	Sousa, Charles
Del Duca, Steven	Malhi, Harinder	Tabuns, Peter
Delaney, Bob	Mangat, Amrit	Takhar, Harinder S.
Dhillon, Vic	Mantha, Michael	Vanthof, John
Dickson, Joe	Martins, Cristina	Vernile, Daiene
DiNovo, Cheri	Matthews, Deborah	Wong, Soo
Dong, Han	Mauro, Bill	Wynne, Kathleen O.
Duguid, Brad	McGarry, Kathryn	Zimmer, David
Fife, Catherine	McMahon, Eleanor	
Flynn, Kevin Daniel	McMeekin, Ted	

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 24; the nays are 67.

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

Are the members ready to vote on the main motion?

Mr. Naqvi has moved government notice of motion number 63. 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.

The division bells rang from 1215 to 1216.

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

Ayes

Albanese, Laura	Duguid, Brad	McMeekin, Ted
Anderson, Granville	Flynn, Kevin Daniel	Meilleur, Madeleine
Baker, Yvan	Fraser, John	Milczyn, Peter Z.
Balkissoon, Bas	Gravelle, Michael	Moridi, Reza
Ballard, Chris	Hoggarth, Ann	Murray, Glen R.
Berardinetti, Lorenzo	Hoskins, Eric	Naidoo-Harris, Indira
Bradley, James J.	Hunter, Mitzi	Naqvi, Yasir
Chan, Michael	Jaczek, Helena	Oraziotti, David
Chiarelli, Bob	Kiwala, Sophie	Qaadri, Shafiq
Colle, Mike	Lalonde, Marie-France	Rinaldi, Lou
Coteau, Michael	MacCharles, Tracy	Sandals, Liz
Crack, Grant	Malhi, Harinder	Sergio, Mario
Damerla, Dipika	Mangat, Amrit	Sousa, Charles
Del Duca, Steven	Martins, Cristina	Takhar, Harinder S.
Delaney, Bob	Matthews, Deborah	Vernile, Daiene
Dhillon, Vic	Mauro, Bill	Wong, Soo
Dickson, Joe	McGarry, Kathryn	Wynne, Kathleen O.
Dong, Han	McMahon, Eleanor	Zimmer, David

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

Nays

Arnott, Ted	Hatfield, Percy	Nicholls, Rick
Bailey, Robert	Hillier, Randy	Pettapiece, Randy
Barrett, Toby	Hudak, Tim	Sattler, Peggy
Bisson, Gilles	Jones, Sylvia	Scott, Laurie
Brown, Patrick	MacLaren, Jack	Smith, Todd
Clark, Steve	MacLeod, Lisa	Tabuns, Peter
Coe, Lorne	Mantha, Michael	Thompson, Lisa M.
DiNovo, Cheri	Martow, Gila	Vanthof, John
Fife, Catherine	McDonell, Jim	Walker, Bill
Forster, Cindy	McNaughton, Monte	Wilson, Jim
French, Jennifer K.	Miller, Norm	Yakabuski, John
Gates, Wayne	Miller, Paul	
Gélinas, France	Munro, Julia	

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 54; the nays are 37.

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

Motion agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I would like to remind all members that there's an event this afternoon at 1:30 p.m. in rooms 228 and 230, when we will be rededicating those rooms as a gathering place. Aboriginal theme rooms are here in the Legislative Building. I hope that you will be able to join me as part of the legislative change. Our First Nations people will be here. There will be a ceremony providing attention to First Nations people.

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

The House recessed from 1220 to 1500.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

NIPISSING SERENITY HOSPICE

Mr. Victor Fedeli: This Friday, I'm looking forward to attending the official campaign launch that is being held for a very important project in my riding of Nipissing: the Nipissing Serenity Hospice. I want to congratulate all of the hard-working volunteers, led by Mathilde Bazinet and Jim Marmino, in moving this

much-needed initiative forward. The construction of our residential hospice will create 50 jobs during construction and 15 full-time and 10 part-time jobs when operational.

Support for these hospices right across the province is vital. The community had put forth petitions, which I supported by reading them into the record in this Legislature. And now the official fundraising starts. Speaker, it's a long road, but nowhere near as difficult a path as the one those who need this hospice will face.

Hospices provide a much-needed place dedicated to providing quality end-of-life care and allowing people to die with dignity.

The Nipissing Serenity Hospice will be a much-valued addition to our community.

I thank you for allowing me this opportunity, Speaker.

SPEAKER'S BOOK AWARD

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Mr. Speaker, I'm going to be a little bit unorthodox and actually thank you for having started up the book award that we have now, for the fourth year, here in the province of Ontario.

I'm especially pleased that a friend of mine, Edmund Metatawabin—not because we pulled any strings, but because he's a great author—along with his co-writer, wrote a book called *Up Ghost River*, which is the story of Edmund and many other people living on the James Bay when it comes to the experience of living out on the land, the experience of what the land means to First Nations, and also what the experience of residential schools has done to members of First Nations across the area. It is a very compelling book; it's a very disturbing book at times, but certainly one that is very much worth reading. I can say that I was no prouder than this Monday night, when you pulled out that envelope, as they do at the awards ceremonies during the Emmys or the Oscars, and you said, "The winner is...." For some reason, I kind of knew that Edmund was going to win because I'd seen his book, I've known Edmund for a long time, and I know what he has written is a very powerful account of his experiences and the stories of the James Bay.

On behalf of all of us here in the Legislature, and on behalf of all our constituents across this province, we want to thank you for putting on this award, Speaker. But I really want to congratulate Edmund Metatawabin for being this year's winner of your book award. It's very well deserved, and I think a lot of people back home are proud to see that Edmund won it.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): A fabulous book, indeed.

DANCING DAMSELS

Ms. Indira Naidoo-Harris: I'm pleased to rise today and speak about an organization doing great work: the Dancing Damsels. This non-profit group is made up entirely of volunteers who are dedicated to promoting the arts and the empowerment of women.

Recently, they held a wonderful event to celebrate International Women's Day. The group honoured more than a dozen women for their achievements. Of the 14 award recipients, I was honoured to be chosen as one of the women achievers. Several women were recognized—

Interjection: Congratulations.

Ms. Indira Naidoo-Harris: Thank you—for their contribution to areas like the arts, engineering and social services.

But the real star of the show was one particular recipient: the one and only Hurricane Hazel McCallion. Hazel was honoured for her 36 years as mayor of Mississauga. She holds the record as Ontario's longest-serving mayor, a title she now shares with Milton's mayor, Gordon Krantz; she established the GTA mayors' committee; she created Hazel's Hope, a campaign to help children with AIDS and HIV in southern Africa; and her list of accomplishments goes on. It was inspiring to listen to Mayor McCallion speak and see the way the crowd responded to her.

As we mark International Women's Day this week, it has been my pleasure to take part in several events celebrating women's achievements, including the Social Services Network in York region, where we honoured important women in the local South Asian community.

It makes me proud to be surrounded by such respected women and I want to thank groups like Dancing Damsels and the Social Services Network for promoting women's empowerment.

POLICE SERVICES HERO OF THE YEAR AWARD

Mr. Rick Nicholls: Every day thousands of Ontarians rely on professional police officers, 911 dispatchers and other police service personnel to keep their families and community safe. The Police Association of Ontario's first-ever Police Services Hero of the Year Award looks to honour those who make a difference in their communities.

Constable Debbie Lafreniere from Chatham-Kent Police has been nominated for her work with a young boy who has been faced with challenges from autism and who also lost his father to suicide. She meets regularly with Devon and deputizes him to help in the fight against bullying while promoting safety.

Devon says this: "She chases criminals and puts them in jail. She makes me feel safe and happy. She answers my questions and sometimes turns on the cruiser lights for me. She tells me I have to wear a seat belt to stay safe." He adds, "She took the picture of us by the cruiser. I put it on my police station at school. She shares with me. I want to be a police officer and be her partner. We will catch criminals and help people be safe."

Thank you, Constable Lafreniere, for being a hero but, more importantly, for being a friend and a mentor to young Devon.

Nominees must be one of the following: a sworn police officer, a 911 dispatcher or any other employee of

a municipal police service. To be eligible for the award, nominations must be submitted no later than 5 p.m. on March 14.

In closing, to nominate your hero, go to the website policehero.ca and be sure to read the stories of the heroes that walk among us.

CANADIAN MOTOR SPEEDWAY

Mr. Wayne Gates: I would like to rise today and talk about one of the most important projects in the province of Ontario today, the Canadian Motor Speedway in Fort Erie. This is a project that is going to bring half a billion dollars of investment into our community and create good-paying and stable jobs for the people of my riding.

The talented Canadian Motor Speedway team and their executive director, Azhar Mohammad, have been working tirelessly with elected officials from all levels of government over the last few years to eliminate barriers and get this project completed. I'm happy to say we're very close to achieving that goal.

This is a project that has partnered with Niagara College, Brock University, McMaster University and the University of Ontario Institute of Technology, and invested in research and design that will benefit the people of this province. It's working with the automotive industry to ensure that the bright young minds of our province have the funding to innovate for a greener, more successful future in this industry.

Simply put, this is a project that can help make Niagara the economic engine that drives the growth of this province and I'm proud to support it.

Mr. Speaker, I hope that the members in this House will stand with me and ensure that we get this project completed, which can create thousands of jobs for this riding and bring in millions of dollars of economic development year after year after year.

DANNY THE BARBER

Mrs. Kathryn McGarry: In my riding of Cambridge last week, a local legend celebrated a personal milestone. Danny the Barber, local legend, philanthropist and generous community leader, turned 80.

Like many others who visited him in his shop on his birthday, I was warmly greeted with cake, a chance to donate to the Cambridge Self-Help Food Bank and his ever-present political opinions.

Born Doné Katsorov in Macedonia in 1936, he immigrated to Canada in 1956. In 1958, he opened his first barbershop in Hamilton, and he moved to the Cambridge area in 1980. Danny has been a fixture ever since.

Photographs cover the walls and ceiling of his shop and he has a story for each. He is fiercely patriotic, displaying a "Proud to Call Canada Home" sign in front of his famous barbershop window. Danny has made helping others a mantra, donating the proceeds from countless clip-a-thons to the Cambridge hospital, the Self-Help Food Bank and veterans, among others. He

helped establish the Cambridge's Grand River Film Festival and the Macedonian Club.

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Want an opinion about goings-on or who will win an election? The people in Cambridge ask Danny the Barber. He encourages people to vote, runs his own poll by keeping a record of his customers' voting intentions leading up to the election, and makes his sought-after predictions more accurately than the scientific pollsters.

Happy birthday, Danny. Thank you for your good deeds and your words, and here's to many more healthy years.

HEALTH CARE FUNDING

Ms. Sylvia Jones: I rise today to highlight the devastating effects of this government's cuts to health care, and how it's impacting my community.

Prior to the release of the provincial budget, I asked the Minister of Health to restore funding to physicians' services after seeing three out of five labs shut down in Dufferin-Caledon and patients being forced to wait in the cold for service. The minister suggested that he was confused by my question and doesn't seem to realize the consequences of his actions.

On February 23, LifeLabs, which operates the two remaining blood labs in Dufferin county, released an open letter announcing their decision to close testing facilities in Thorold, London and Ottawa, in addition to consolidating 15 patient service centres and ending nine arrangements for local medical office collection, as well as reducing hours of operation in 53 patient service centres.

While it remains unclear if the labs in Orangeville and Shelburne will be impacted, there is no doubt that my constituents now have fewer options and longer wait times when it comes to lab services.

In the letter, the president and CEO stated that the decision was made in part because of "a series of government funding reductions in Ontario." The minister refuses to admit there is a direct connection between his cuts and lab closures across Ontario.

As a result of this latest announcement, I urge the minister to restore funding to health services so patients across Ontario can receive the essential services they rely on. Care, not cuts.

DIGITAL MEDIA

Mr. Han Dong: I'm delighted to rise today to recognize the interactive digital media companies in my riding of Trinity-Spadina.

Yesterday, I was joined by the Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport at marblemedia in Liberty Village to announce an increase of \$6 million to the Interactive Digital Media Fund. I'm proud to say many of these companies are in my riding.

The Interactive Digital Media Fund will help companies develop innovative projects like video games,

mobile apps and online magazines. For instance, I spoke to Mr. Mark Bishop, a partner of Distribution360, who said that this fund will help his business to grow and create jobs.

Mr. Speaker, province-wide interactive digital media productions support approximately 17,000 jobs and contribute over \$1 billion in revenue annually. It is important that we recognize their contribution and support them for our economic future. Interactive digital media are becoming more and more important in people's everyday lives. Ontario's support to this sector demonstrates our commitment to build an internationally competitive Ontario.

Congratulations to all the interactive digital media companies in Trinity–Spadina.

STUDENT ASSISTANCE

Ms. Daiene Vernile: On Monday, I had the opportunity, along with my colleague the MPP for Cambridge, to visit Forest Heights Collegiate Institute in Kitchener to meet with students, teachers and school administrators to share with them good news regarding our modernization of the Ontario Student Assistance Program, or OSAP.

As you know, Mr. Speaker, we're launching the new Ontario Student Grant program. For the first time ever, students from low-income families earning less than \$50,000 a year are no longer going to have to pay for tuition. This is a game changer in my community, where we have two universities and a college, and for all Ontarians. It means that students who wouldn't even bother applying to college or university because of the costs now have a chance at higher education. Students in families earning less than \$83,000 will now qualify for the grants.

One of the young people at our event on Monday was 18-year-old Amanda Hicks. She has just been accepted to Ryerson in Toronto to study psychology. Amanda first heard about free tuition from her mother on Facebook, and she thought it was a joke until she looked into it and learned more about the announcement in our budget. She said, "It changes my whole planning for my future. I'm not going to be struggling to pay for food and living."

"I can't tell you how happy I was to hear this."

Mr. Speaker, I believe that students like Amanda, regardless of their background or financial circumstances, should have a shot at a better future. This is helping to build Ontario up.

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

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

828117 ONTARIO LIMITED ACT, 2016

Ms. McMahon moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill Pr40, An Act to revive 828117 Ontario Limited.

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

Mr. John Yakabuski: Absolutely. It's about time we revived it.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I think that's a carry. Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Pursuant to standing order 86, the bill stands referred to the Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills.

PETITIONS

HYDRO RATES

Mr. Ted Arnott: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario. 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 as well and I have affixed my signature.

ONTARIO DRUG BENEFIT PROGRAM

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

"Whereas the government of Ontario will require most seniors to pay significantly more for prescription drugs, starting on April 1, 2016, under changes to the Ontario Drug Benefit plan;

“Whereas most seniors will be required to pay a higher annual deductible of \$170 and a higher copayment each and every time they fill a prescription at their pharmacy; and

“Whereas the average Ontario senior requires at least eight different types of drugs each year to stay healthy and maintain their independence; and

“Whereas many seniors on fixed incomes simply cannot afford to pay more for prescription drugs and should not be forced to skip medicines that they no longer can afford and put their health in jeopardy;

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

“Stop the government plans to make most Ontario seniors pay more for necessary prescription drugs and instead work to expand prescription drug coverage for all Ontarians.”

It's my pleasure to affix my signature to this petition and give it to page Jordan.

SPECIAL-NEEDS STUDENTS

Mr. Victor Fedeli: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas provincial demonstration schools in Ontario provide education programs and services for students with special education needs who require intensive supports due to severe learning disabilities; and

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“Whereas there are three demonstration schools in Ontario: Trillium in Milton, Sagonaska in Belleville and Amethyst in London; and

“Whereas with specialized and targeted intervention and remediation provided by the provincial demonstration schools, children with severe learning disabilities have found success and are finally in an environment where they thrive and can learn in a meaningful way and access the education to which they are entitled; and

“Whereas these schools are in a consultation process that will most likely lead to closure while, even with early identification and early intervention, local school boards are ill-equipped to handle the needs of these students;

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

“(a) to oppose this recommendation of demonstration school closures becoming part of the Ontario budget (which is strictly a cost-cutting measure which does not take into account the resulting high costs at school board level to provide same service types to severely learning-disabled students);

“(b) actively move to enable these valuable schools to remain in place to serve students who have exhausted all other available resources in order to access equal education for themselves without added costs, to which they, like all students, are entitled by the law of the land, by opposing the closure of demonstration schools; and

“(c) actively move to enable the continuation of the added role of demonstration schools as front-runner pro-

viders of direction for technology use in schools, literacy development and curriculum delivery, by opposing the closure of demonstration schools.”

I agree with this, Speaker. I will sign my name to it and give it to page Jessie.

ÉDUCATION POSTSECONDAIRE EN FRANÇAIS

M. Taras Natyshak: J'ai une pétition pour l'Université de l'Ontario français.

« À l'Assemblée législative de l'Ontario :

« Entendu que sur le 10 février le RÉFO, l'AFO et la FESFO ont présenté le rapport du Sommet provincial des États généraux sur le postsecondaire en Ontario français;

« Entendu que le rapport a indiqué un besoin et un désir pour une université de langue française;

« Entendu que le 26 mai, 2015 la députée France Gélinas a présenté un projet de loi pour créer cette université;

« Nous, soussignés, pétitionnons l'Assemblée législative de l'Ontario comme suit : de commencer la création de l'Université de l'Ontario français dès que possible. »

J'appuie cette pétition. Je vais la signer et l'envoyer à la table des greffiers.

HEALTH CARE FUNDING

Ms. Sylvia Jones: My petition is 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 support this petition, affix my name to it and give it to page Andrew to take to the table.

HEALTH CARE

Mr. Gilles Bisson: J'ai une pétition ici qui dit :

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly”—that's us—“as follows:

“(1) Reverse the cuts to health care;

“(2) Return to the bargaining table with the OMA (Ontario Medical Association) to resume negotiations for a fair physician services agreement;

“(3) Work with all front-line health care provider groups to develop plans to create a sustainable health care system for the people of Ontario.”

I’ve signed that petition.

RAIL SERVICE

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Further petitions? The member from Nipissing.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Thank you, Speaker. Sorry.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): You weren’t ready. At least the member for Dufferin–Caledon was ready.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: “Whereas both the Canadian government and the Ontario government need a transportation policy, plan and investment that include transporting both passengers and freight by rail; and

“Whereas this is essential for our competitiveness in the world economy, for reducing carbon emissions and for socio-economic connectivity; and

“Whereas we must stop the abandonment of rail and support the safest, more efficient and least polluting mode of transportation: trains; and

“Whereas without rail as part of northern Ontario’s transportation system, most of our communities are not sustainable;

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

“That the government of Ontario provide reliable, safe, all-season, accessible and affordable passenger train service throughout northern Ontario connected to Toronto and Ottawa.”

I sign my name and give this to page Xavier. With my apologies; I thought I had it in my hand.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Apology accepted.

ONTARIO NORTHLAND TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION

Mr. John Vanthof: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the provincial government has cancelled the Northlander passenger train which served the residents of northeastern Ontario; and

“Whereas the provincial government has closed bus stations and is cancelling bus routes despite promising enhanced bus services to replace the train; and

“Whereas the Ontario Northland Transportation Commission (ONTC) has been given a mandate that its motor coach division must be self-sustaining; and

“Whereas Metrolinx, the crown corporation that provides train and bus service in the GTA ... is subsidized by more than \$100 million annually”—substantially more, by the way—“and

“Whereas the subsidy to Metrolinx has increased annually for the last seven years;

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

“To direct the Minister of Northern Development and Mines to reverse the decision to cancel bus routes immediately and to treat northerners equitably in decisions regarding public transportation.”

I fully agree and send it down with page Luke.

HEALTH CARE FUNDING

Ms. Sylvia Jones: My petition is to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

“Whereas the Ministry of Health has implemented a number of health care services cuts that impact patient care; and

“Whereas as a direct result of ministry cuts, the laboratory at the Highlands Health Network is closed as of January 1, 2016, this will drastically reduce services, affecting many patients who rely on the in-house laboratory for essential tests; and

“Whereas patient care is affected by the government’s cuts including: \$54 million of the federal Canada Health Transfer from Ontario’s health care budget, \$815 million from physician services, \$50 million from physiotherapy services for seniors and 50 medical residency positions across the province;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Ministry of Health as follows:

“Restore funding to the physicians, so that the Highlands Health Network can continue providing laboratory services for all its patients.”

I support this petition, affix my name to it and give it to page Tristan.

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 ... 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. I will sign my name to it and hand it to Owen.

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 agree with this petition, sign it and give it to page Andrew.

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 great province of Ontario.

It gives me great pleasure to sign it and give it to page Andrew.

DRIVER LICENCES

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

I agree with it and pass it off to Julia.

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 March 2, 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): Pursuant to the order of the House dated March 9, 2016, I’m now required to put the question.

Mr. Sousa has moved second reading of Bill 173, An Act to implement Budget measures and to enact or amend various statutes.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I heard a no.

All those in favour, please say “aye.”

All those opposed, say “nay.”

I believe the nays have it. They were loud.

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

We have a deferral. Pursuant to standing order 28(h), this will be deferred till deferred votes on March 10, 2016.

Second reading vote deferred.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): 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 8, 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 Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate?

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I'm pleased to rise to speak to Bill 172, the Climate Change Mitigation and Low-carbon Economy Act. I'm particularly pleased to have the opportunity to speak to this bill because, over the last few years, environmental issues have gained new importance in my riding of Oxford. As I've explained to this House many, many times, a company has put forward a proposal to place a landfill site in a limestone quarry in Beachville. A lot of concerns have been raised about this site, but to me the biggest concern is the risk to our drinking water.

The proposal is to put the landfill close to the Thames River and not far from one of Ingersoll's main municipal water wells. That means that a leak from a landfill could contaminate our drinking water and possibly the entire river. As the mayor of Ingersoll often says, it's not a risk worth taking. Just last week, the mayor spoke to the Toronto public works and infrastructure committee to make it clear that our community is not willing to be a host for Toronto's or any other city's garbage. I want to commend him for his work on this issue.

I also want to take a minute to commend the many, many volunteers who have been working for years to fight this landfill proposal, doing research, writing letters, producing newsletters, fundraising and many more tasks. We've arranged that they can drop off letters at my office and I bring them to Queen's Park and get them to the minister.

Mr. Speaker, almost every week I bring hundreds of letters and postcards for the minister. Thousands and thousands of people have signed the petitions that I have presented in this Legislature.

This landfill proposal has led to a lot of discussion about how to protect our environment. I've heard ideas about how to promote recycling. I've heard proposals about incineration. I've heard discussions about what to do with old gravel pits. But, Mr. Speaker, in the hundreds of conversations, emails, letters and Facebook discussions, not one of my constituents has ever said that the best way to solve our environmental problems is to give the government billions more—and that's what this bill does.

Climate change is a serious challenge that requires a credible plan that will reduce greenhouse gas emissions while protecting taxpayers and our economy. Our leader made it clear on the weekend that we need to take action to stop climate change and protect our environment.

He also made it clear that we do not support the Liberals' tax grab, and that any plan must be revenue-neutral. That means that every dollar collected should go to the people and businesses of Ontario. The Liberal government intends to raise \$478 million from cap-and-trade in 2016-17, and by 2017-18 this government will increase cap-and-trade revenue to \$1.9 billion. That's the amount they wasted on the gas plant and eHealth. All those billions of dollars going to government revenues are simply a tax grab, and we do not—and will not—support another tax grab by this government. The people of Oxford just won't stand for it.

The government is requiring natural gas and petroleum industries to purchase all their emission allowances during the first period, which means that the people of Ontario will be hit with higher prices for gas and natural gas right away. The same goes for our businesses, which just told me, through my annual business survey, that they are already struggling with the cost of doing business in Ontario.

One of the businesses actually sent me a copy of an ad that he had received from New York state that talks about the fact that they have property and sales tax abatements, low-cost hydro power, 0% New York state manufacturing tax, employment incentives, and low-interest loan and grant programs. These are the jurisdictions, Mr. Speaker, that we're competing with. The companies that have located there are the ones that our businesses are competing with, our companies who are already paying spiraling hydro costs, spending staff time on red tape and soon paying into a mandatory pension program. It is our businesses that are going to be paying for the government's billion-dollar tax grab. They're going to be sending that money to the government instead of creating jobs or investing in new environmental technology.

Mr. Speaker, in all the decisions about protecting the environment that we've had in Oxford, I've never had a request to increase the cost of gas by 4.3 cents a litre. When driving is a necessity, increasing the cost of gas doesn't change anyone's behaviour. It just takes more money out of their pocket, money that people can't afford after paying the increased cost of hydro, money that people can't afford after losing their job as more and more companies are leaving Ontario, money that people really won't be able to afford after the government's mandatory pension plan kicks in.

The people of Oxford know that in rural communities driving isn't a luxury and it isn't optional. People aren't driving for fun. They're driving to get to the doctor, to get to work, to buy groceries. There simply isn't another way to get there. We don't have subways or streetcars in Oxford; most people don't have access to a bus.

Residents in Oxford protect the environment in many different ways, Mr. Speaker. Many people live in the

country because they appreciate the land. Our farmers take care of the land and the soil every day, whether it's no-till or taking steps to reduce the amount of fertilizer. The grain farmers have established one million acres of self-sustaining pollinator habitat.

When I was on council in South-West Oxford, Mr. Speaker, we created the first mandatory recycling program in Ontario. We added a trailer behind the garbage truck and refused to pick up bags that contained items that should have been recycled. It was simple and it worked. It made a real change in people's behaviour, helped protect our environment and didn't create a billion-dollar slush fund for government.

Mr. Speaker, it isn't just the people of Oxford who are already doing their part. I recently had an opportunity to meet with many municipalities at ROMA. Many of them are already seeing the impacts of climate change on their infrastructure and are taking steps to reduce pollution.

1540

At ROMA, we also heard concerns that under this government's proposal, cogeneration projects like those in Ontario's greenhouses will be penalized. These are the environmental projects that this government helped to fund, and now those same projects will be penalized. It's hard to believe that this is the best environmental outcome.

If the government's real goal with this bill was to address climate change, they would have designed a program that was revenue-neutral rather than one that will take billions out of the pockets of Ontario families.

If the government's real goal was to protect the environment, they would have created this program with independent oversight.

If their goal was to protect the environment, they would have more details on what steps farmers can take to sequester carbon and earn carbon credits.

Instead, they just have details on how much government will take from the people with this new tax.

Mr. Speaker, we believe in protecting our environment. I was part of a government that created the living legacy land use strategy, which added over 300 new parks and protected areas totalling 2.4 million hectares. We did it without causing significant pain to Ontario's taxpayers. That's a record to be proud of.

We aren't the only ones with a record, though. I was here to see when the Liberal government created the health care tax, at the time the single biggest tax hike in Ontario's history. We saw that money go into general revenues instead of health care. Since then, we've seen cuts to health care across Ontario by this government. We've seen hospital rooms closed. We've seen long wait-lists for services that people need. If you ask the people in my riding who had surgery postponed because they ran out of money in operating rooms until the new fiscal year, they can tell you the effect that that health tax has had for them.

If you ask any of the nurses who have been cut or the people in communities where the hospitals have been cut, they will tell you how effective that health tax has been.

It's clear that it is simply a tax grab, and they're trying to do it again.

Mr. Speaker, we've shown that you can protect the environment without causing significant pain to taxpayers. The government needs to go back to the drawing board and design a system that is truly about protecting the environment and addressing climate change, instead of a system that is really just about implementing a sneaky tax.

I want to thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, for allowing me this opportunity to speak. As we speak, we change Speakers and everything changes and it stays the same. I believe I started with you, Mr. Speaker, and you're back. With that, I thank you for the opportunity to speak.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Thank you to the member from Oxford.

Questions and comments?

Mr. Taras Natyshak: I'm always pleased to listen to the member from Oxford. He brings a lot of knowledge and wisdom to this House. We affectionately know him as Uncle Ernie because, of course, he is related to our colleague the member from Timiskaming-Cochrane.

He raises some really valid points. There are a lot of unknowns here and a lot of uncertainties, and I think that breeds cynicism in the general public when it comes to this government in particular, and their track record of unveiling a whole host of projects and policies, and their failures along the way. We have to point to Ornge air ambulance. Unfortunately, we have to do this. We have to point to eHealth. We have to point to the cancellation of the gas plants. These are multi-billion-dollar boondoggles that, under the control, guidance and the stewardship of the Liberal government, have failed miserably.

To deal with an issue as consequential as climate change and policy that will really be transformative in our province, I think members of the opposition are well within their reason and their ability to question the legitimacy, the plan and the overall strategy. We have to do that.

That being said, Speaker, we'd like the government to ensure that they're not going to time-allocate this bill. In fact, we should be talking about it for as long as we possibly can because it is incredibly complex. It affects so many areas of our economy. It can work. That's why, as New Democrats, we support a cap-and-trade model. We know it can work if it's done right. We simply don't, at this very moment, trust the plan that the government has put forward because we've seen their track record of failures.

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

Ms. Daiene Vernile: I've been listening to the debate on Bill 172, the climate change act, and I'm very pleased to weigh in on the discussion this afternoon and to share with you some lived experiences from my home riding of Kitchener Centre, just to illustrate how this is going to work.

We're not waiting for cap-and-trade in my riding to fight climate change. We're actually already doing this. In fact, in 1983, we were the first jurisdiction in all of Canada to adopt the Blue Bin Program, and now you've got millions of people across Canada who are doing the same.

Let me tell you about this local company. They're called Sustainability CoLab. They're leading other regional businesses and groups in reducing their carbon footprint. You might ask, how exactly are they doing this? Well, you register your company or group with Sustainability CoLab and their staff will share their expertise, and then you get an energy audit. You can add better windows, doors, insulation, better lighting; maybe you're going to get a better HVAC and so on.

We know that all of these items can be very costly to a small business when they're just trying to stay afloat. That's why our environment ministry has invested in Sustainability CoLab so that they can help small businesses with the cost of going green. That's how the cap-and-trade system is going to work: Big polluters are going to pay into a fund and that money will go to helping us transition our homes and our businesses to a low-carbon economy.

In Waterloo region so far, the participants that voluntarily signed up managed to reduce their carbon emissions by 53,000 tonnes last year alone. That is the same as taking 12,000 cars off the road.

The advantage for us here in Ontario is that we can look to other jurisdictions that have already done cap-and-trade—in Quebec and in California—and we can learn from their best practices. This works for the economy, it's good for the environment, and Bill 172 is going to save you and me money in the end.

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

Mr. Jim McDonell: It's a pleasure to rise. The member from Oxford talks about having a hard time believing this government anymore. I see the Liberals and their Kool-Aid. They used to just sprinkle it around, but nobody believes them anymore, so it's flowing out of their jugs in large amounts. People need a solution here and all they're hearing are more promises that never pan out.

We've heard how the Green Energy Act was going to save the planet. Well, the only thing it has done, and will do, is cost the people of Ontario around \$170 billion. That's what the Auditor General reported last year. That's what the people of Ontario will be paying until 2032. It's a huge waste of money—money that, I guess, could have gone to their \$160 billion in infrastructure, if you look at just that money coming out of the economy that the ordinary ratepayers are paying.

This bill is the latest Liberal money grab, because they're out of money. The budget that they issued just a week and a half ago was very clear. We see this \$1.9 billion going directly into revenue. All the talk about trying to save the world—this has nothing to do with anything but trying to balance the budget on the backs of

Ontarians, when we should be looking at trying to help them.

Businesses are leaving. This is another case where our businesses will be disadvantaged. We'll lose more jobs, as we've seen over in the manufacturing sector that's left. A plan that was focused on helping Ontario, the Green Energy Act, has actually hurt Ontario and taken away resources, and now we see the next new low. The government is looking at new ways of extracting money from our people, but the people are leaving and the businesses are leaving, and we'll have nothing to show for it but a lower standard of living.

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

Ms. Catherine Fife: It's always a pleasure to listen to the member from Oxford county. He always brings the true, lived experience of his constituents to this place.

He mentioned the impact that Bill 172 will have on the cost of living for those in rural Ontario and his riding. Our members have mentioned the north as well, where they don't have options. They don't have transit options and they haven't for quite some time, especially under this government.

He did mention, of course, that the concern that I think we all have is around fairness, and then also around transparency, around where the funding is actually going to go. It's interesting, because late last week, the Financial Accountability Officer even expressed his concerns, just to validate the member from Oxford county. He said, in his most recent commentary, "It is unclear to what extent these new" cap-and-trade "revenues will be directly tied to new program spending or can be used to fund existing spending commitments."

1550

I don't think that you can blame us, on this side of the House, for having some real confidence issues, some real trust issues. Look at the Trillium Trust accounting procedures, for example. This confidence is also linked to their track record. Even when the minister made the announcement of the \$100-million energy retrofit program that would be connected to natural gas like Union and Enbridge, there are whole jurisdictions that don't deal with Enbridge or Union Gas. Kitchener was one of them, and part of Kingston was another. We even heard in the House yesterday that—the Minister of Energy stood up in this House and said, "Don't worry about it"; if you're on propane or other sources, Union Gas and Enbridge are going to take care of you. That isn't the responsibility of Union Gas or Enbridge. That is the responsibility of the Ministry of Energy.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member for Oxford: two minutes.

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I want to thank the members from Essex, Kitchener Centre, Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry and from Kitchener–Waterloo for their kind comments. There's a couple I want to respond to.

The member from Kitchener Centre made a great point when she talked about the good things that were already happening in Kitchener to reduce the carbon

footprint by a number of industries, and that was without this legislation. It kind of points out that it's already happening. The only difference between what the businesses in her community were doing last year and what they're doing this year is that the government is creating a slush fund that they're going to use for other things, while they're still going to be expecting the people in Kitchener Centre to do exactly the same thing they've been doing and hopefully reducing our carbon footprint. It really points out that the money they are collecting is not really for that purpose.

As I was listening to the other comments, and particularly the member from Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry, I realized the—what shall we say?—boondoggle that they created with the Green Energy Act and the prices they're paying for that hydro. Well, actually, a lot of times they're paying to get rid of the power that's being produced by them. If you look at what they've been telling us from across the aisle, in fact they may very well be using the slush fund to help pay some of that cost to cover up the bungle and the mess they made out of that. I think that was the first time that that may very well be happening.

The last thing I want to say is to just take a moment and thank the members who spoke from the New Democratic Party. I think on this issue we can say that, universally, we're all in favour, and, as pointed out by the New Democratic Party, we all support the need for reducing the carbon footprint in this province and to do what we can to avoid climate change. We on this side of the House believe that that can't be done or shouldn't be done strictly by creating a slush fund so the government can pay for their mistakes as opposed to bringing forward legislation that will actually accomplish something.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Before I move on, I just want to remind members that, when they come into the chamber and leave the chamber, they are to acknowledge the Chair. There are a couple that try to sneak out when I'm distracted and don't nod. I'll be watching.

Further debate?

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: Point of order.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Point of order: the member from Oxford.

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: Just to let you know, Mr. Speaker, I'm leaving the chamber.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Okay, thank you. Very funny. Very funny.

The member from Timmins–James Bay.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Well, listen, I don't think there is any progressive person in the province of Ontario who doesn't understand that we have to be able to move on trying to reduce emissions in our environment when it comes to what goes in the atmosphere.

I saw, for example, this weekend—which was interesting—the Conservative Party finally admitted something has got to be done. They've taken an approach in order to deal with emissions into the environment, particularly the air, by going the way of a carbon tax. Now,

that is not my preferred model. Quite frankly, I think a carbon tax is problematic. I think the Conservatives will have to answer to voters about whether this is a good or a bad idea; I'll leave that for another debate.

The point I want to make at the beginning is that we can't afford to do nothing. We were chatting about this yesterday—some of our colleagues. We all differ somewhat in our approach of what we would do, but we all agree we have to do something because, if we don't get this under control, it's going to become too late. We do need to make sure that we deal with emissions so that we're able to properly make sure that we don't continue harming our planet, the place that we all call home.

Now, this particular cap-and-trade program the government is purporting could work. There's a possibility that it can work. Of course, that's why we're going to support it. But it's very dependent on how the government sets it up.

I want to give you just but one example of how you could utilize cap-and-trade and the revenue from cap-and-trade in a very positive way. The idea of cap-and-trade supposedly is, aside being from able to trade carbon credits—and I'll leave that for somebody else to debate—that the money you raise with cap-and-trade you then invest in technologies and industries that are able to lessen their reliance on energy that causes carbon emissions. The consumer has better choice and we're able to spur new industries, and that is a good thing.

I want to give an example in my own riding about how that would be possible. There's a company that I've met with called Zenyatta minerals. They have a graphite deposit just north of Hearst. This graphite deposit—believe it or believe it not—is the richest graphite deposit known to man. There is no graphite of the purity that we see in this particular deposit just north of Constance Lake and Hearst.

The interesting part with this particular mineral is: Guess what you use graphite for, Mr. Speaker? Making fuel cells and batteries that are utilized for cars. There's a real opportunity here to be able to utilize a natural resource from the province of Ontario—in this case, graphite—and transforming that graphite into a product that is able to lessen our reliance on energy such as gas and oil by building fuel cell and battery technology that will allow us to better utilize wind and solar power in our own homes and, yes, build cars that are able to utilize battery technology that makes those cars affordable and practical.

But that's not going to happen on its own because what's likely to happen with Zenyatta minerals is that if the province doesn't find some way of incentivizing somebody in the private sector to build those batteries and fuel cells in Ontario, guess what will happen to the graphite? It will be mined, it will be refined, it will be shipped to India, it will be shipped to China, it will be shipped somewhere else in order to add value.

Why wouldn't we, as a province, say, "Let's take the money that we raise from cap-and-trade and utilize that in order to build what needs to be built to support those

industries which are able to utilize that mineral, graphite"? Then, Ontario can become the leader when it comes to developing technologies around batteries and fuel cells and produce those products here in Ontario, where you can utilize the manufacturing jobs, create jobs for Ontarians, support mining activity in northern Ontario that essentially builds our economy, but, more importantly, the product that we then build allows not only our jurisdiction here in Ontario, but anywhere else we export our batteries or fuel cells, to lessen their reliance on the use of carbon.

For example, in a place like where I live, where there is no natural gas—there is your wood stove and electricity to heat your home out in Kamiskotia Lake, where our cottage is. I'm there pretty well all the time with my wife; it pretty well became our principal residence after a while. There is no option for natural gas. I would love to invest in solar panels, I would love to invest in a wind turbine of some type or a combination system to generate electricity. But it's not yet affordable and efficient because there is no mechanism by which to store the electricity that I can utilize on a day that I need that power.

If we were able to develop this fuel cell technology here in Ontario and we were able to develop the battery technology here in Ontario, utilizing graphite mined north of Hearst and Constance Lake, and utilize those products in order to make battery technology or fuel cell technology that makes some sense, guess what? I'm then able to lessen my reliance on utilizing either wood or electricity, in this case, and utilize the sun and the wind to generate electricity. On the days when it isn't sunny and the wind isn't blowing, you can utilize your batteries in order to supply electricity to your home.

It just seems to me that would be a natural fit for something that we could do that (a) really does something positive to address the issue of the environment and emissions into our atmosphere, and (b) assists our economy to be able to build opportunities here in Ontario so we don't always have to export our technology and we don't have to export our jobs into other markets.

1600

Ontario is in an amazing position. We have some of the best areas to be able to find natural resources—everything from copper to graphite to gold to you name it—but we're really bad at adding value to it. We mine it and then we ship it out where somebody else adds value to it outside of Ontario, normally outside of Canada.

That's why we as New Democrats have put forward legislation that essentially says that minerals that are mined in Ontario must be processed in Ontario. I would go one step further, which is that we need to add value in Ontario, because that then develops an industry here in this province that can't be exported. In other words, if you did it right, if you were to say, "I'll use the graphite in order to be able to build the technology around battery and fuel cell technology here in Ontario," it would be hard to outsource those jobs to China, India or wherever it might be. You'd be able to do that in places like

Burlington, Timmins or wherever it might be that you want to build those particular types of industries, and strengthen our economy at the same time.

But the key is—and this is where I'll end, because unfortunately I only have 10 minutes—will the monies raised by cap-and-trade actually be used for that type of initiative? If so, I think this is a good thing. Then we can all be proud of what we've done in this Legislature, to not only green our planet, but to build a stronger economy for Ontario.

But as I read the legislation now—I might be wrong, but as I read it now, and I want this bill to go to committee, so that other people can look at it and tell us what they think—it looks like the government set it up so that they can actually use some of this money for general revenue to pay for other things. I'd just say to the government across the way that it's a good initiative, but it's got to work right.

The other thing I want to touch on very quickly is the issue of gas tax, because the government is saying that part of what they're going to do here is increase the price of gas in order to build the dollars necessary to be able to invest in green technology and green initiatives. Well, it's a real penalty for people in northern Ontario, because in many cases we have no other option but to utilize our vehicles.

Yes, Timmins has transit, but most communities in northern Ontario don't have transit. So when you want to go from point A to point B in your community, or point A to point B between communities, because bus service is not what it needs to be and there is no train service, you're essentially left with walking, snowshoeing, taking your dogsled or driving your vehicle on the road. I don't have a dogsled, but you follow my point.

The government is saying they're going to raise gas taxes as a mechanism to green our economy. I would warn the government that that's going to be a real problem for people in rural and northern Ontario who don't have the other options to be able to make a decision not to use gas. The government is going to have to think through how the heck we do this in some way that doesn't penalize people because they happen to live in a part of the province that doesn't have the type of transit and intercity transportation that we have between places like Ottawa all the way down to Windsor.

With that, Speaker, I want to thank you for this time to debate, and I look forward to the comments from honourable members.

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

Hon. Michael Gravelle: It's always helpful to listen to the member from Timmins–James Bay. We have worked together on a great number of projects, and certainly have the same goals in mind in terms of northern Ontario.

I think it is important to point out that this is an important piece of legislation, which I think is recognized by the member. He has come up with some interesting points, particularly related to a company I know well,

Zenyatta. As I know the member also knows, we've been able to support the company through the Northern Ontario Heritage Fund Corp., which was crucial to allowing them to continue to go on.

They are really creative. I had an opportunity, as I suspect the member opposite did, to be down at the Prospectors and Developers Association of Canada conference over the last number of days. I saw Aubrey Eveleigh, who is the head of Zenyatta; he has got some truly creative concepts in mind, and I certainly see those possibilities as well. We want to encourage them to happen.

But also important, I think, is that the member suggested that, indeed, the proceeds for the projects may not all necessarily be going to projects that will reduce greenhouse gas pollution. Indeed, they will; that's committed. The money will be going into those projects, and I think there are some real opportunities for us.

I've got very little time left, suddenly, but the bottom line is, we know that one of the most innovative industries is the mining sector, in terms of what we've seen in the efforts they've made to reduce greenhouse gas emissions over the last number of years. That's one of the reasons we're working so closely with them to make sure we get it right.

This an important piece of legislation. We need to set a long-term framework for climate action, a stronger foundation, certainly, for a cap-and-trade program. I appreciate the comments and look forward to continuing to work with the member for Timmins–James Bay.

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

Mr. Victor Fedeli: There's been a lot of talk about where this money for the cap-and-trade will go. I'd like to quote some of the government's own statistics from Bill 172.

We have said this in the past, and we're going to prove it here today: The cap-and-trade money will be treated exactly like the Hydro One sale money. It is going to artificially reduce the deficit, and here's how they're doing it. Their own bill, Bill 172, on page 47, definition 68, section 2, item 3: This is where they've buried this, which is what they did on Hydro One. The money can be used "to reimburse the crown for expenditures incurred by the crown, directly or indirectly, for any purpose described in paragraph 2." So you go up to paragraph 2 and you go through that, and you find that it's any public money under subsection (2). So you go to the back where the subsections are, and it very, very clearly says that the money in schedule 1 can be used for "initiatives relating to the reduction of greenhouse gas from transportation including the following ... public transit vehicles and infrastructure...."

So again, Speaker, peel it all back. They can use the money for public transit vehicles and infrastructure, and that's what they say they will use it for, except for the fact that it's to reimburse the government for monies already spent. Basically, they put that money—the \$130 billion over 10 years; now it's \$160 billion over 12

years—in the budget. That's already accounted for. They will put the cap-and-trade money against those items, and take the already-budgeted money out to artificially reduce their deficit. That's it, Speaker.

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

Mr. Taras Natyshak: I want to thank the member from Nipissing. Our caucus and our researchers have found and tracked the same sort of thing in this bill, in terms of where potentially the money from the cap-and-trade system and the revenue generated could go. A lot of "mays," but not a lot of definitive answers in terms of where it will go.

We know that if you are to have buy-in from the general public and if your bill and your plan are to be effective, the money that flows and the revenue that is generated through the funds have to be targeted. They have to be accountable. They have to be transparent. They can't go to general revenues. You won't get people to buy in. But Minister, it is on your conscience to speak up at caucus and to tell your Premier that this can't happen. It's far too important an issue.

I'm trying as a member—a partisan—to defuse the inherent, embedded partisanship that can happen, as we've seen all around the planet, and especially in the United States. That can happen in this debate. I'm trying. It's very difficult, but we would be best served if we really looked at the technical aspects of this. It is complex. None of us in here are environmental researchers or climate change experts, I don't think. Many of us know some of the basic science around it. What we all know is that it poses a real and imminent threat to the civilization of the planet. It can't be understated.

Whether we do it right is upon us. If we don't do anything, it will be cataclysmic. If we do it wrong, it will be also cataclysmic. Let's get it right.

1610

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Trinity–Spadina.

Mr. Han Dong: I'm delighted to add my voice to this bill. Not too long ago, I ran into a whole bunch of seniors in my riding of Trinity–Spadina. They complained about how the price of vegetables has been going up to a point that they really feel it's becoming challenging because they all live on fixed incomes. Yellow chives were selling for \$22 a pound, which is absurd, and it has almost tripled in price in a very short while. I talked to my friends in that business. I said, "What's going on?" They told me it's because down in the States, where they import vegetables from during the winter, they're experiencing major floods due to extreme weather.

We all know that it is becoming more and more challenging for people to survive, especially the most vulnerable in our community. I look at my two kids and I think that the world is so different for them and will be different for them when they grow up. I have to say I am hopeful because I've attended announcements for electric cars, I've read up on information on better power storage technologies and better materials for retrofit programs,

but we need a government to lead the charge. We need a government to set the structure so we can focus resources on these aspects.

I appreciate the points that the member from Timmins–James Bay brought up. I want to point to the fact that, if passed, this bill, the proposed Climate Change Mitigation and Low-carbon Economy Act, will ensure transparency and accountability by committing to investing proceeds into projects that reduce greenhouse gas pollution and by establishing a greenhouse gas reduction account with the funds.

I'm quite confident that the government is going to achieve its goal, and I look forward to supporting this bill.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Timmins–James Bay, two minutes.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Well, pardon the skepticism, and I want to touch on the last point, which is that you're quite confident that this government is going to achieve its goal. Listen, these are the same guys who brought us the energy system that we have today and the changes to the energy system that have seen the price of hydro go up by two or three times.

This government doesn't have a very good track record when it comes to managing some of this stuff. This is the same government that tried to manage a change from a blended system of air ambulance transfers to one where we now have a public one, but it messed up so much and ended up costing us more money than we had, quite frankly.

So yes, the opposition is saying the bill is going in the right direction. Nobody is arguing that the government should not have a cap-and-trade bill. Even the Conservatives agree that you've got to do something, which is—man, that's a step forward. Now they are on to the carbon tax. Fair enough.

Interjection.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: You two guys can get along, Liberals and Conservatives. You're used to it; you're about the same, anyway.

My point is that our fear is that the government says the right things, is making it look as if they're going to do something, but in fact, depending on what the details are in the bill—and I think the member from Nipissing is right, and it's the same point that the member for Kitchener–Waterloo has made, and the member from Beaches—not Beaches–East York, but Toronto–Danforth—

Ms. Catherine Fife: I miss him.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I miss Beaches–East York, too.

But the point is, they have been saying, "Listen, when you look at the details of the bill, this thing has some real problems when it comes to making sure the money from cap-and-trade is actually utilized for reducing the amount of emissions into our atmosphere." And that's not a good thing.

We'll vote for this bill, we are going to allow it to go into committee and we are going to fight like hell, as they say, in order to make sure that we get the changes that we

need to make this bill work, because we can't afford not to make it work.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate? The member from Nipissing–Pembroke.

Mr. John Yakabuski: That's me. Not quite, but it's close enough.

Thank you very much, Speaker, for the opportunity to join the debate this afternoon on Bill 172, the Climate Change Mitigation and Low-carbon Economy Act.

There's no debate in this House about whether or not climate change is real. The Conservatives were the first ones to recognize that.

Interjections.

Mr. John Yakabuski: I purposely started out that way to get the reaction from the Liberals, because they like to pretend they have a lock on caring about the environment. But the reality is, when you look at their legislation, it's not about the environment; it's about their addiction. It's about their addiction to spending, and they have taken advantage.

I made that comment because I recognize, Speaker, as I travel around my riding and as I meet people, and as I talk to my children and their friends, that people out there are concerned about our future. They want to make sure that we're taking care of the issues that matter to them, and that we'll ensure that their future is a healthier one and that the environment is protected. One of the challenges that we face today is the amount of carbon that is emitted into the atmosphere.

Let it be known, Speaker, that where the Liberals like to claim that they're the champions of reducing emissions from coal—yes, they finished the job. They happened to be elected in 2003; whoever was elected in 2003 was going to deal with that issue. But let's make it very clear that it was the Conservatives, under Premiers Mike Harris and Ernie Eves, who made the commitment by ordering the closure of the Lakeview Generating Station. That was the first serious act about closing.

Interjection.

Mr. John Yakabuski: They tabled and set the date, and all you guys did, Kevin, was put the padlock on the gate. That's what you guys did. They set the table to ensure that that station would be closed by legislation. That is what was done, and that was the beginning of a recognition that, at some point in this province, we were going to stop generating electricity by the burning of coal. Well, that's been accomplished.

But the Liberals not only have—yes, they closed the coal plants and we passed legislation here ensuring that they would not be reopened. But what did the Liberals do when they were desperate—and they are desperate today. They're very desperate, and they'll pull anything when it comes to trying to hold on to power.

Speaker, in the by-election in Whitby–Oshawa, the Liberals went so far as to go around saying, "If you elect the Conservatives, they're going to start burning coal in the coal plants again. They're going to bring back coal." They got it a little wrong. We're bringing Coe—not coal, Coe. We're bringing Coe to Queen's Park, and he's here today because the Liberals went into Whitby–Oshawa

and told bold-faced lies about what the Conservatives' plan was.

I never said a word about a single member, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): I'm glad you defined that you didn't say an individual, but you labelled the whole party. You'll withdraw.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Withdraw. The Liberal candidate lied.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): You're pushing your luck. Withdraw. Don't play games. Withdraw.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Withdraw. I'd like some help from the table on that. So you can't call a member of the public a liar in this place?

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): I think you can keep quiet, too. All right?

In fact, I'm going to have the Clerk come and we're going to discuss it while you sit down.

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Okay. Now that I've been questioning and it's been officially said, I was correct. You cannot say that.

Mr. John Yakabuski: You cannot say that?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): You cannot say that, and I don't want to hear it again. You've said it twice, and if you challenge me again, you're warned.

Continue.

Mr. John Yakabuski: I'll be watching closely for anybody on this side of the House—on any side of the House—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): I don't need you to be doing my job. I'll be doing the watching and you'll be doing the listening. Thank you very much.

I believe that the member from Niagara Falls nodded when he came in. I'm not sure, because I was distracted. I hope he did.

Mr. Wayne Gates: I absolutely nodded to you, sir.

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

1620

Mr. John Yakabuski: Thank you very much.

Apparently we're going to continue with the debate. I will have some questions later about some other people in our society who have been called similar names in this House and no one has ever been castigated for it, interestingly enough. However, let's get back to the debate.

Whatever happened in the Whitby–Oshawa by-election, members of the government party, the candidate of the government party and workers for the government party were going around saying something that was completely not the position of the PC Party. They even took out radio ads. And do you know what happened? The people in Whitby–Oshawa said, "Not this time. Fool me once, shame on me." There you go.

Here they are: The party that wants to portray themselves as the protector of the environment has come in with this cap-and-trade scheme that has got nothing to do

with the environment. It is about filling the coffers of the Liberal Party, about filling the coffers of the government, so that they can spend money on any one of their other schemes. My colleague from Nipissing has pointed that out.

They're going to charge 4.3 cents a litre on gasoline, and who's going to get hurt the most? People in ridings like Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke, Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry, Prince Edward–Hastings, Dufferin–Caledon, Nipissing and Chatham–Kent–Essex. The TTC doesn't run through Palmer Rapids; the TTC doesn't run through Stirling.

Interjection.

Mr. John Yakabuski: I say to my colleague from Prince Edward–Hastings, no, it does not.

They're going to get hit with this tax. We don't know when it's coming, but we're told it's coming. And where is the money going to go? My colleague from Nipissing has pointed that out very clearly; he's done the research. If you read the bill, basically they've got to put this money into a segregated fund—pack it away—and it's got to be spent on Green Investment Fund-types of projects, but they can have an equal amount of money out of the budget that was earmarked for those types of projects in the first place.

It is not about the environment; in fact, it never was. It's just another way to try to balance the books by 2017–2018, so they can go to the people and say, "Hey, look at what we did."

But as the Financial Accountability Officer has brought us warnings, it's the structural deficit that is the problem with this government. Any kind of sales and one-time cash grabs to try to make the books look better is not going to change the actual situation that the province is in. Their cap-and-trade scheme is the wrong way to go about it. The cap-and-trade system has failed in Europe and failed here.

It doesn't force anybody to really reduce emissions. It's like if you've got a plate of rice and you're not really interested in eating, but you're moving it around steadily. You're just moving it around and moving it around. The amount stays on the plate. It doesn't disappear; it just keeps shifting around and moving. Somebody is playing with their food but nothing is actually dropping. The carbon emissions aren't going down.

Our plan for carbon pricing here in Ontario will actually ensure that carbon emissions go down, and it will be revenue-neutral. It will not be on the backs of people who care about the environment. The Liberals are taking advantage of how people feel about the environment so that they can pick their pockets and look after their pet projects while not worrying about whether emissions go down or not. That's wrong.

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

Ms. Catherine Fife: It's always a hard act to follow the member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke. There was some energy with his 10 minutes on Bill 172. I would just like to say that the member's first point was

that the Liberal Party doesn't hold a monopoly on everything that is environmental. I think that we would completely agree with him on that.

He made the point that the Liberal government has a credibility issue with regard to where money goes and a lack of transparency around the revenue that comes into this place. He made the point that there is going to be a significant amount of revenue that comes in through the cap-and-trade program. He also made the point that his party has made a shift; they have shifted, and for some reason the Liberals like to mock them.

For us, this would be the place to take the high road because, as the member from Essex has pointed out, this is too serious to get it wrong and it's too serious to play games. What we see with this shell game around the funding and the revenue that's going to come in to this place, especially with regard to schedule 9—and with schedule 9, the changes as they relate to Bill 173 aren't even necessary. Yet, this government has said that there will be dedicated funds, on which they backtrack later on.

Unfortunately, the member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke has accurately portrayed the distrust that we have around where the funding is going to go as it relates to cap-and-trade. We have an emerging body of evidence with this government as to how they mismanage funds when those funds do come into this place, and quite honestly we share the concerns as expressed, because I do believe that, around accountability and transparency, those concerns are genuine.

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

Mr. John Fraser: It's a pleasure to respond to the member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke; he is a hard act to follow.

I do want to say just very quickly, to the comments from the members from Timmins–James Bay, Essex and Kitchener–Waterloo, that there is evidence that this is a very important bill. It's about the future of our children and our grandchildren. I'm glad that there has been a conversion on the road to Damascus from the opposition—

Interjections.

Mr. John Fraser: No, there is no plan. The plan was hatched on the weekend. If it's on the back of anything, it's on the back of an envelope because a few people haven't taken down their petitions yet. So, not that I doubt the sincerity of that, and I think it's healthy that we're having this debate—I believe that it is too serious for us to make it too partisan. But what we need to remember is that it is the opposition's duty to say, "We don't trust you; we oppose you. We're going to hold you to account." I get that.

Government is about choices. I know how they make choices over here, which is, "We want you to spend more on this and do more on this and tax these people." But every day I listen to the Leader of the Opposition and members on the other side—whom I have a great deal of respect for—stand up and say, "I want you to spend more money on this. You need to spend money on this hospi-

tal. You need to pay doctors more." But do you know what? In the next breath you say, "Structural deficit. Debt. You've got to get control." You fought us every—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Stop the clock. Sit down. Stop the clock.

Are we all done with the yelling?

Mr. John Yakabuski: Well, he got us upset.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): I don't think you were asked to speak.

Mr. John Yakabuski: We got them upset; he got us upset.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Yes, that's fine. You're really pushing it today.

Are we all settled down now? Good.

Finish.

Mr. John Fraser: Simply put, government is about choices, but you can't choose everything; you need to pick a lane.

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

Mr. Rick Nicholls: It's rather interesting how people can get really riled up in this House and get the anxiety levels up. Unfortunately for those who may be of senior category, they'll have to pay more for their drugs because they need to calm themselves down.

Back in 1970—I'm going to take you back in time, Speaker. Not to say that you would remember this, but I do. There was a movie called Love Story, starring Ryan O'Neal and Ali MacGraw; you may remember it. It starts off with the words "Where do I begin / To tell the story of" just how bad this bill really is? Andy Williams—

Interjection.

1630

Mr. Rick Nicholls: No, I won't sing it. Andy Williams wrote the lyrics, recorded that song and it was a big hit.

But, you know, one of the things that I really want to talk about is that this Liberal cap-and-trade scheme is nothing more than command-and-control economics, as they talk about. It's under the guise of a market-driven solution. In short, here's what we have: We have a government that designs the game. They set the rules. They select the players. They appoint the officials. They pick the winners and losers. Obviously, their game is rigged, and those who stand to benefit are, perhaps, the Liberals and companies and consultants with close ties.

As a result of this, I take a look at what their regulatory scheme is. One of the things that I find rather interesting is this: In a briefing, the bureaucracy said that they're developing regulations that will be released later this year for administrative penalties, administrative fees and offset credits. Do you know what that tells me, Speaker? It tells me that they have no plan, they have no details, and yet they are forcing and they are ramming this cap-and-trade bill through the Legislature, which we feel is totally unfair. They need more consultation.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Renfrew—oh, sorry. The member from Essex.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Oh, if you want me to go, I'll go.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): No, but I've got you on my mind.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Thank you, Speaker. Sorry, I wasn't sure.

It's kind of tragic to hear how quickly the debate in this House has descended. Again, I'm going to try to bring it to the policy and to the real threat that this poses: the fact that people are working really hard on this issue around the world and we know that it takes a global effort; the fact we are seven billion human beings on this planet, quickly going to nine billion on a planet that has finite resources that fuel our economy, and that we know, in terms of the structure of our economy, have led to the demise of our environment and have led to climate change. We know that now. It is indisputable. Perhaps that's why we're hearing some new ideas from the members of the opposition.

The question is, how do we act quickly and how do we act fairly, equitably and with transparency? I would love nothing more than to see the efforts of this House produce something that we can all agree on, that we can all support and all champion, because of the nature of this threat. I'm not hearing the concern from my colleagues here. I don't know whether you get it or not, but all points indicate that, within the next 20 to 30 years, the global average temperature will be unsustainable.

I'd like to hear specifics from government members and I'd like to hear the tone of the debate reflect that.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke has two minutes.

Mr. John Yakabuski: I appreciate the questions and comments from the various members: the member for Ottawa South, the member for Chatham–Kent–Essex, the member for Essex and the member for Kitchener–Waterloo.

Yes, sometimes this place does get a little raucous, especially when members on one side of the House don't like comments being directed at them for their own actions. But this is a serious issue, and the PCs clearly tabled on the weekend that they have a different plan for tackling climate change, one that we believe will be more acceptable to the people because it will be far more fair and it will be transparent. It will not be shrouded in some kind of secret curtains so that the people don't understand how this money that the government is going to be collecting from the cap-and-trade scheme is actually going to go back into environmentally enhancing projects that will help reduce the amount of greenhouse gases that are being emitted into the atmosphere.

On the other hand, what we talked about on the weekend—and in the course of time, our plan will become very, very clear, defined and transparent. You will see the difference as we approach the electorate in 2018. This bill will be the law by then. This will be the law because they have the majority and, by the sounds of it, they have the support of the third party. But we will be able to point out the deficiencies and the wrong-headedness of their

plan. We will be going to the people in 2018 with our plan, and I have a good feeling that ours will be the one they accept.

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

Ms. Catherine Fife: It's a pleasure to rise on behalf of the residents and citizens of Kitchener–Waterloo today. This is an issue that the residents of Kitchener–Waterloo care deeply about, and it's an important debate for us to be having in this House.

The NDP has been consistent in our support of a cap-and-trade system, but we've also been consistent in our ask of the government that the system actually work. We can't afford to have a system that fails to lower emissions and fix the damage that has already been done. We need a system that is fair, effective and transparent. The plan that the Liberals have put forward has some gaps in it. We have raised many questions around the fairness, the effectiveness and, quite honestly, the transparency of the revenue that will come in to the province of Ontario.

The government has proposed dedicating a special fund to combat climate change using the revenues from cap-and-trade. This has been the key issue, I think, that people have talked about in this House. Yet the greenhouse gas reduction account that is proposed and that they envision is far from effective and has the potential to further marginalize those who are already most affected by the changing climate and rising emissions. Instead of using this money to directly invest in reduction, the government has created a greenwashed slush fund that they're calling the greenhouse gas reduction account. It's not a separate, special-purpose account, but an accounting procedure with flexible rules that allow the government to spend the money on anything it wants. The government wants Ontarians to believe their word rather than what is written in their budget bill. Frankly, Speaker, I think Ontarians will rely on what's in black and white.

These revenues absolutely should be used to further help mitigate the effects of climate change, but this simply cannot be done if the government is unwilling to tie this funding to evidence and require tangible results. There's no commitment to record the inflows and outflows of money. The balance of the account can be spent on programs directly or indirectly related to greenhouse gas emissions. The money is meant to be spent on greenhouse-gas-reducing programs, but the ministry has yet to set guidelines for what this actually means. So you cannot blame us for raising some concerns about the transparency of these revenues.

There are no standards set for offsets, and there is no legislative requirement that anyone confirm the programs will lead to real, additional, verifiable and permanent reductions, as required under the Western Climate Initiative that Ontario signed on to. This is what the province signed on to and, as it stands right now, they are not compliant because they have not signed on to the transparency about where the revenue is going to go.

It's no wonder that people are skeptical of this government's commitment to properly manage this money. The

Financial Accountability Officer, as I already mentioned, even expressed his concerns about it. In his most recent commentary, he said, “It is unclear to what extent these new” cap-and-trade “revenues will be directly tied to new program spending or can be used to fund existing spending commitments.” The Liberals can say that this fund will further their climate change strategy as much as they want, but they’ve set it up to have as little oversight as possible.

Aside from the loose requirements for the greenhouse-gas-reducing programs, the new cap-and-trade scheme will also completely avoid any involvement of this Legislature’s independent officers. It’s no wonder they would do this when some members of this government worry that evidence-based policy is too complex for the Auditor General.

Not only are the Financial Accountability Officer and the Auditor General cut out of the loop, but this legislation makes no mention at all of Ontario’s Environmental Commissioner, a role established under a previous NDP government. The Environmental Commissioner is required, under section 58.2 of the Environmental Bill of Rights, to provide an annual report on the government’s efforts to reduce greenhouse gases, but apparently, this shouldn’t require the right to information on cap-and-trade other than what the government decides it wants to disclose. So you can see that this is a missed opportunity. You can see why we have some issues with the way that this is structured. Mr. Speaker, how can we expect to tackle climate change when one of our province’s environmental leaders, an officer of this Legislature, is left in the dark? And I pose that question honestly to the government side of the House.

1640

There are several ways in which this government climate change strategy also misses other marks. Take the plan to fund energy retrofits, for example: As part of an overall climate change strategy, the government has pledged \$100 million to help Ontarians retrofit their homes and be more energy efficient. It might sound very good on paper, but what the people of this province weren’t told is that this money is only available through two energy providers, Enbridge and Union Gas. This was confirmed, actually, on Tuesday morning by the Minister of Energy. What about the thousands of Ontarians who aren’t served by these companies, either because of where they live or the fuel that they use to heat their homes? What we have heard, most recently in a conversation with the farmers, is that they’re trying to get off the grid. They are trying to get off the grid because they can’t afford the costs of energy and of heat. There are some of my constituents who live in Kitchener who certainly won’t be benefitting from these retrofits since none of them are served by Union or Enbridge.

The government said, “Trust us, we’re going to take care of it. Trust us.” But you know, people don’t trust this government. Because it’s not in the bill and it’s not in the budget, we have serious trust issues. In fact, if you look at the entire province, only 37,000 household across

this province are eligible—37,000. How can this government claim to have an effective climate change strategy if this is the kind of policy they implement? What about those low-income Ontarians or people who aren’t homeowners, or the people living in northern Ontario who use other fuels while dealing with harsher winter conditions than others face further south? Mr. Speaker, it’s clear that when it comes to action on climate change, this government is happier to put power in the hands of big industry and overlook the needs of those most affected by rising emissions.

These retrofits are one of the multiple ways that businesses will stand to disproportionately benefit from this new cap-and-trade scheme while regular Ontarians must be the ones who pay the price. The government has proposed that all large emitters get free allowances for four years. The NDP understands the need to keep Ontario’s business competitive in an increasingly global economy, which is why we agree that trade-exposed industries should be considered when exemptions are being made. But the government will have any and all large emitters, regardless of the industry and regardless of how much they pollute, get a holiday from paying their dues. While big businesses can enjoy their break, Ontarians—everyday Ontarians themselves—will start paying their share immediately.

The Canadian Environmental Law Association has become one of the many voices recognizing this problem. Erica Stahl, who is the CELA counsel, wrote, “While the cap-and-trade bill does not include any measures that would alleviate the impact of energy price increases on low-income Ontarians, it is highly attentive to any problem, real or imagined, that the cap-and-trade system could cause for industry.”

This speaks to the priorities of this government. Our counterparts in California, who have also signed on to the Western Climate Initiative, didn’t wait to include businesses in all sectors in their cap-and-trade regulation. Ontario should follow suit. Giving those large emitters a holiday for four years is simply not fair, and Ontarians recognize this.

Given that Ontario has lagged behind in its efforts to fight climate change, we’ve been able to see what others have done before us. As I mentioned, California took action very quickly—Quebec, British Columbia and, most recently, Alberta. California requires that 25% of its carbon revenues go to helping disadvantaged and marginalized communities. Please, listen to that suggestion. There has to be a way for Ontario move forward and not further disenfranchise or marginalize people in this province who are already hurting as we try to tackle the issue of greenhouse gas emissions.

Mr. Speaker, in conclusion, the bill as it is crafted right now raises three major concerns for us, just in case you weren’t listening.

It is an issue of fairness. California has already led the way. You don’t need to invent the wheel. You don’t need another task force or working group on this.

Make sure that you dedicate 25% of the funds that come in to alleviate the impact that this will have on the poorest of Ontarians.

Please address the transparency. We have to. We have to do the due diligence. As the finance critic for Ontario's New Democrats, I have to make sure that the money that comes into this place is spent responsibly. We have some serious trust issues, as already mentioned.

We need a fair cap-and-trade program. The possibility is here, the potential is here, and we're willing to work with them, but we want to make sure that it's an effective program and that it actually addresses the climate change crisis that this world is facing and that this province is facing because of your inaction over many, many years.

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

Ms. Soo Wong: I'm pleased to rise this afternoon to lend my voice in support of the proposed Bill 172.

I listened attentively to the member from Kitchener-Waterloo about her concerns, but I think the piece I want to draw to her attention, and those who are watching at home, is about the proposed bill and the creation of the GHG, better known as the greenhouse gas reduction emission account.

On the explanatory note in the bill it clearly states, "Payments from the Consolidated Revenue Fund: An account called the greenhouse gas reduction account is established in the public accounts."

On page 47 of our proposed bill, it clearly lays out what the account is going to do and where the proceeds are going. I just want to do a quick—because my time is really short—where the money is going. The member opposite is concerned about where the auction proceeds are going to go. It's going to go to energy sources and uses such as the production of renewable energy; land use and buildings, such as retrofitting of buildings; transportation—the Minister of Transportation is here. He can tell you that it's going to focus on alternative and low-carbon forms of transportation, compared with traditional gasoline and diesel vehicles.

This afternoon we were at the Standing Committee on the Legislative Assembly and we heard from witnesses who came before the committee about the whole issue of natural gas vehicles.

The other piece here is that I want to remind the member opposite that this morning we had a breakfast session with American legislators, talking about how great this province is doing in terms of green, clean energy initiatives and, more important, when we got rid of the coal plants and what this says across North America.

At the end of the day, this is what the government is doing. This is one part of it.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Prince Edward-Hastings.

Mr. Todd Smith: I'm pleased to bring some remarks on Bill 172 and the presentation by the member from Kitchener-Waterloo, who always does her homework before speaking here in the Legislature and who did a

very good job outlining some of the problems with Bill 172.

The biggest problem, when it comes right down to it, isn't with anything that's in the bill, although there are a lot of problems with what's in the bill. It has to do with the word—I think she said "mistrust." There is a lot of mistrust when it comes to the operations of this government. They are preying—not with an A, with an E—on the goodwill of the people of Ontario when it comes to greenhouse gas emissions. What they're actually doing is hauling in \$1.9 billion.

We've seen this play out before in this Legislature with this government when they brought in something called a health premium. Remember how that health premium was supposed to solve all the province's health care woes? And where did the money from that health premium go? It went into general revenues, and we know what kind of problems we have in our health care system today because the money didn't go where it was intended to go.

We can't trust this government to get it right. They're sucking \$1.9 billion out of our economy, out of the pockets of taxpayers. What they're doing is going to have more of an impact in filling the pockets of lobbyists and lawyers than it is on saving forests or ice caps. That's the bottom line with the way this government has drawn up this bill.

There's big concern out there about the affordability—and the member brought it up—of living in Ontario as it is now. This bill is going to make it more expensive when it comes to electricity. When it comes to natural gas, it's going to make it more expensive to live in Ontario, and it's going to have very little impact on our environment.

1650

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

Mr. Wayne Gates: I'm pleased to rise.

I've been in committee meetings for a couple of hours today talking about the environment, but what I'm really surprised about over the last number of hours is that I really don't think we're hitting on the real issue here. The issue here is that we have a problem with our climate. We have a real issue of making sure that our kids and our grandkids are going to have the same opportunity we had. We have a real issue here with water, that we may run out of water.

I know my colleague in front of me talked about, "What are we doing? Let's talk about it." We had a really good comment that talked about food. Look around at what's going on with our seniors today. Because of the price of food, they can barely afford to eat. More and more seniors today are going to food banks because they can't afford the food. Why has the cost of food gone up so much this winter? Some of it is because of the Canadian dollar, although we've seen some relief in the Canadian dollar in the last few days. Most of it is because of weather. Mostly it's because of what's going on with climate change.

I believe we all got elected here to do the right thing. It's not about scoring political points on this issue. I don't care where the Conservatives are. I don't really care where the Liberals are. I don't really care where we are. What we have to do is get this right because our kids and our grandkids are depending on us. That's why I ran to be an MPP. I wanted to have a say in that.

Last night, I had my granddaughter here for the first time, and I can't tell you how proud I was when she came into my office in 361. I showed her my office, where I work, and she asked me, "What do you do?" I said, "I try to make sure that you have the quality of life that I have." Let's not lose that in this most important debate.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Minister of Labour.

Hon. Kevin Daniel Flynn: It is a pleasure to rise on this bill. I think a lot of members around the House are saying the same thing in a number of different ways. Certainly, there are some people who I think have just come to realize that this is important, but a number of us from all sides of the House, in the past, have realized that this is something that we do absolutely have to get right. There's no going back on this one. This is one where, if we don't do something about this and we don't do the right thing about this, then the consequences are indeed very dire.

What we have before us is a stand-alone bill. It's before the House right now. People are passing their opinions on that, but certainly what I see in the bill is a very good, long-term framework for us to move forward. It's got to go to committee, obviously, and there may be opinions expressed there and some amendments. But if you look at the history of this, there was a very small amount of people some time ago who said, "You know what? If we don't do something, the consequences for the planet and the generation that comes after this aren't very good." Then you've got a few people who realized that these people were probably right. You had a large amount of people at that point saying, "No, that couldn't possibly happen. That can't possibly be true." I think we called them "climate change deniers," and we called them all sorts of other things.

But over the years, this has gathered steam and people are finally looking at the weather patterns we have out there, the temperature changes we're seeing just on a local basis, the amount of snowfall, the amount of rainfall and the severity of storms. All the evidence is pointing towards that very small group of people at the start who had it right. So now it appears, after the weekend, that we're all roughly on the same page. We all believe in climate change, and we all realize that we need to do something about it.

What we have before the House right now is a wonderful start to a relationship with other jurisdictions that are taking the same approach to that. The consequence of this is that we're going to be able to move ahead, and the young people who are sitting in this room are going to have air to breathe in the future and a planet that's worth living on.

The other stuff that's being talked about—I don't have a whole lot of interest in that, but I really would like the House to get behind this.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Member from Kitchener–Waterloo, two minutes.

Ms. Catherine Fife: Thank you to the members from Scarborough–Agincourt, Prince Edward–Hastings and Niagara Falls and to the Minister of Labour.

He just said it: He doesn't have a lot of interest in listening to transparency about where the money is going, the effectiveness of the program or the fairness of it. You have the ability to actually craft a piece of legislation that would work and that would address the concerns.

I just want to address the point around California. They're one of the signatories on the Western Climate Initiative as well, and they didn't wait to include businesses in all sectors in their cap-and-trade regulation; they made sure that all of those businesses were part of the program from the beginning. Ontario should follow suit. We've made that very clear.

Given that Ontario has lagged for so long—the critic from Toronto–Danforth mentioned that there is a credibility issue here. This has been reannounced and announced and announced. The credibility piece is where the money is going to go, how the government is going to collect the revenue, and how you're going to actually try to protect the most vulnerable people in our province.

When I say that California requires that 25% of its carbon revenues go to helping disadvantaged and marginalized communities mitigate the problem and adapt to a changing environment, this is something that the Premier and the minister should look into, because we are hearing that it's getting so expensive in the province of Ontario for everyone.

To the point that the member from Scarborough–Agincourt mentioned around where the money is going, it's not just me saying that there's a question about transparency. The Financial Accountability Officer has even expressed his concerns about it. He said, "It is unclear to what extent these new" cap-and-trade "revenues will be directly tied to new program spending or can be used to fund existing spending commitments." These concerns are real; they need to be addressed by this government.

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

Mr. Todd Smith: It's a pleasure to join the debate here this afternoon on Bill 172 representing the fine constituents of Prince Edward–Hastings riding.

Before I get into my remarks, I would just like to say that it's amazing to me, listening to the debate here this afternoon, how some on the government side think that the actual regulations or the direction of the bill is irrelevant. It just brings me back to the Green Energy Act. Everybody had their head buried in the sand on that bill on the government side. They thought it was going to be great. I'm sure that they all thought that the Green Energy Act was a good thing and it was going to clean up the air in the province of Ontario. They didn't care about the unintended consequences.

What are we dealing with now in Ontario just a few short years later? The highest electricity prices in North America, manufacturers have left Ontario in droves, and it's because the government didn't care about the finer details of the Green Energy Act. The devil is in the details. The devil is in the details when it comes to Bill 172 as well, this cap-and-trade deal.

Let's accept here that everyone wants to do something to help the environment. We've all come to that realization. If we're agreeing on nothing else this afternoon, let's all agree that there's a problem and acknowledge that maybe we disagree on how we go about fixing it. But if you don't know what's in your own bill, that's a problem. If you're going by what they told you in the corner office, I suggest that you actually read the documents; read the bills. You just heard our finance critic, Mr. Fedeli from Nipissing, earlier this afternoon talking about what's happening with the money from cap-and-trade. It's not actually going to go to clean up the environment or reduce greenhouse gas emissions. It's going to go to reduce the deficit or to be used on pet projects that the government wants it for.

We all want to reduce greenhouse gas emissions in Ontario. We're doing a lot more than a lot of the other countries and a lot of the other provinces are doing, but that's not an argument against not doing anything. In hockey, if your goaltender stops every shot, you don't win the game. You still have to score a goal to win the game.

The problem with cap-and-trade, which is the centerpiece of both the budget document and in the speech, is that the details show that this is more of a show horse piece of legislation than it is a workhorse piece of legislation. If you want to reduce emissions—and, by the way, we all do—why are Ontario's biggest polluters all exempt from the immediate implementation of the program while families have to pay right now? People down the street from you, Mr. Speaker; people who live down the street from me; people who go to work every day: They have to pay now, but the biggest polluters in Ontario don't have to pay now. They don't have to pay it for a few years, if they ever do.

1700

As I said earlier, this is doing more about lining the pockets of lobbyists and lawyers than it is about reducing greenhouse gas emissions. If you look at the regulatory formula that's being used to determine who gets credits and how many credits they get and what the emissions cap is going to be, there are almost a dozen independently auditable variables. Taking aside for a second the fact that the biggest polluters are currently exempt, the ones that aren't are experts at finding a way to reduce overhead and costs. There are accounting divisions, compliance divisions and administrative divisions in companies and industry associations across the province whose sole job is to keep costs down while making sure they either are or appear to be compliant.

The reality of the marketplace, the reality of any regulatory regime—and I say this as a guy who spent two

years as this party's red tape critic—is that the more complicated it is, the more loopholes you create and the less effective your regulation becomes.

This is a complicated cap-and-trade scheme. The medium-sized businesses—the men and women who can't afford the big accounting firms or the in-house compliance division that their major competitors can—end up shouldering a higher percentage of the regulatory burden. Complicated isn't just the opposite of simple; complicated is the opposite of effective.

Any real consultation with small and medium-sized business usually has one take-away that goes along with it: If you're going to introduce a new regulation or a new tax or anything that they have to comply with, make it as easy as possible to understand and to comply with. What I don't think this government understands is why that's the case. If you run a small or medium-sized business, every minute that you spend filling out paperwork is a minute that you're not spending either making a product, selling a product or providing a service to your customer. If you have an entire division of people devoted to regulatory compliance, that kind of paperwork is now their job. If you have 10 people working for you, chances are pretty good that all of them have other work that you need them to be doing and you actually can't afford to have them not doing that so they can figure out the number of production credits minus the production allowance in the target year, subject to adjustment, that you have to buy. It's a complicated scheme.

Every small and medium-sized business owner I've ever talked to hates bills. The only thing they hate more is the paperwork. Hating bills is easy to understand: It's money going out. Usually, it's a product of money coming in. You had to order stuff or subscribe to new services because your business is growing and you need to provide service or product to customers. Paperwork isn't a product of money coming in; it's money going out and it's time going out, as well.

Complication is the enemy of effectiveness. If what you want is an effective system here in Ontario—and I want to point out that I started this by saying that we all want to do something to save the environment—a complicated system is less likely to be an effective one. Years of creating government regulation should tell us that. In fact, the government has admitted in briefings that it doesn't know how many people it will have to hire to administer cap-and-trade or what the costs will be to administer it. Given that we're talking about the most indebted subnational jurisdiction on the planet, it strikes me as unwise to cut them a blank cheque for an unaccountable program that many doubt will do anything to actually cut greenhouse gas emissions. But we know how much this government likes to create and increase the size of bureaucracy.

I'd like to quote from something that a former member of this House had to say about cap-and-trade in this regard. We've heard this a few times now, but I'd like to say it again: "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." That was said by a constituent of mine—at least a part-time constituent of mine: former Liberal finance minister Greg Sorbara.

Sorbara was similarly critical about whether cap-and-trade would actually reduce greenhouse gas emissions, saying, "There's no evidence, anywhere in the world, that" cap-and-trade "actually does work to significantly reduce carbon emissions."

So what the government is giving Ontarians, at the end of the day, is a needlessly complicated program that has the potential to be ruinously expensive and not effectively fight climate change. Fighting climate change requires a free market solution, and what the government has given the people of Ontario is a fake market solution. It's created a program that is meant to deliver headlines and not results. It's created a program that it knows has the potential to be rife with abuse, and what's more, it's done it knowing that the EU emissions trading system was just audited and a \$5-billion tax fraud was found there.

All of this is the result of putting in place a system where emissions become too difficult to track. How many credits a company is or isn't supposed to buy is subject to an algebraic equation that would stump some professors, and the government gets to decide who the rules apply to and who they don't. Tragically, the most disappointing thing about this is how unsurprising this whole thing is.

It's not the first time that we've seen the government use money that is dedicated to do a specific purpose on pretty much whatever it wants. I go back to where I started: I believe that we all want to do something to help the environment. I do not believe that cap-and-trade will in any way accomplish that. As I alluded to earlier, we've seen this movie before, with the health premium. The money has to be dedicated to go where it will be used to have the effect that it's intended to have. Otherwise, health premium money, which was supposed to go to save our health care system, ends up paying for cancelled gas plants. It ends up paying for Ornge scandals. It ends up paying for all kinds of scandal and abuse.

If you are going to create this program, create it properly, with a dedicated fund, so you have the intended results from it. Cap-and-trade should have its own place, its own pool of money so that we can actually reduce greenhouse gas emissions in Ontario.

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

Ms. Catherine Fife: While the member from Prince Edward-Hastings and I don't agree on cap-and-trade as a whole, I think we share some concerns around the complexity of this plan that the government has brought forward. I think that he makes a good point in that the more complex, the more complicated a plan or a scheme—he used the word "scheme"—is, then the less likely that you're going to have buy-in. This is human nature, more than anything.

And we have seen some missteps. When the government first made their announcement around the retrofit—the \$100 million—they only connected Enbridge and Union Gas, not understanding or not knowing that the city of Kitchener is not served by Union Gas or Enbridge and that parts of Kingston are not served by Enbridge or Union Gas. Yesterday, even the Minister of Energy, when we asked how people who are on propane or on diesel are going to be part of this plan, said that Enbridge and Union Gas are going to take care of it.

Well, if you don't have a relationship with the company Enbridge and you don't have a relationship with the company Union Gas, what does that look like for you? As a farmer, for instance, on diesel or a farmer—farmers are going to propane more and more, because they want off the grid. There are so many people in this province—and companies, quite honestly—that want off the grid because this government has made energy so expensive that it's cost-prohibitive. So they're actually finding their own solutions.

The point that the member from Prince Edward-Hastings has made is that there have already been some missteps, so there's already a confidence issue, which lends itself to not having credibility, which will affect buy-in, which will affect climate change.

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

Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde: It gives me great pleasure to join this wonderful debate. I think we can all agree that the environment is something very important.

I'm replacing a member for Ottawa-Orléans, Mr. Phil McNeely, who retired firmly believing that the environment was something that we needed to address. For all the years that he was in our riding representing me at Queen's Park, I was very happy that he was that voice for us in Ottawa-Orléans.

I'm a little bit, I would say, surprised or curious, because from this side of the House suddenly carbon pricing is a good thing. One thing that I remember that their leader said on Saturday during their convention was that every single decision would be made from the grassroots, and they would send an email out to all the people of Ontario to develop their policy.

What if the people of Ontario would say to that leader that, actually, cap-and-trade is a good thing? I just want to remind everyone at home who is listening to these wonderful debates that I think we collectively—maybe for a few, no. But I would say we all agree that climate change is something we need to tackle. What we're proposing is making the polluters pay.

1710

I know there was some issue regarding the fact about where the money will go and all this. We were very transparent in announcing our Green Investment Fund. What I like to say to people is that every single dollar that will be achieved while we're reducing the GHG in our province will be reinvested for the people of Ontario.

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

Mr. Jim McDonell: I'm proud to rise on behalf of the residents of Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry, because, actually, they're fed up with this government. They've heard them for 12 years, they see their plans and—I commend the member from Kitchener–Waterloo when she talks about people in her riding having trouble. What do they get? They get an answer: “Well, the poor people can apply for a grant.” Yes, \$2 a month, \$24 a year. The price of electricity went up 100 bucks just two months ago. What planet are they living on?

I see them talk about Phil McNeely, a member of this House; he was always a proud engineer. I remember when I first got here—the summer before, the Professional Engineers of Ontario did a scathing report on the Green Energy Act, talking about why it was technically going to fail. And they ignored it. It wasn't us saying this; it was members of the profession that actually designed the system saying this would not work. You can't generate energy without someplace to put it. And what have we seen? Billions—not millions—of dollars wasted that should have gone back to help out the people of Ontario. But, no, there's no money for the people of Ontario.

Then this green energy or this fund they're talking about—let's be serious. The cap-and-trade system has been tried many places in the world and it's failed miserably. That's what our leader said he didn't support. He didn't support cap-and-trade. We support pricing on carbon and to look after the polluters that are polluting. But we must look after the businesses and the people who need these jobs. Under this government, there are more and more poor people all the time; unfortunately, there's not more and more money to help these people. This government's own direction or policies have made more people poor in this province.

It's time to move them out and let somebody else take over to run this province.

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

Mr. Taras Natyshak: It really is incredibly important to take part in this debate. I'm really honored to be here today to hopefully represent a generation that has dedicated their lives to advancing the issue of climate change and to turning governments around, turning economies around toward a more sustainable and regenerative type of economy, a resilient economy. These are things that I think are becoming more commonplace.

What I think we're hearing as a common theme in today's debate is a question around the use of the proceeds of the greenhouse gas reduction account. I have yet to hear from any government member or any minister as to specifically how we can be assured that the money that goes into the accounts, into the identified account in the bill, will not be swapped out for items that have already been budgeted. For instance, the criteria within the account and the accounting are so abstract that there is no guarantee that any of the cap-and-trade revenue will deliver meaningful, independently verifiable greenhouse gas reductions. For example, the money could be used to

subsidize 90%-empty diesel trains on the Union Pearson Express line. There's one really simple example that I would love to hear a government member explain to us. We know you've already allocated funds for the UP Express line. How is it that the money that goes into the cap-and-trade revenue stream won't be used to subsidize that? Because we know you've already used it. We know you've already budgeted and allocated it for us.

So there's a really basic example. Please, members of the government, answer that question for us in the opposition.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Prince Edward–Hastings, two minutes.

Mr. Todd Smith: Thank you to my colleagues from all parties who have chimed in on my remarks: the members from Kitchener–Waterloo and Essex from the third party; and the member from Ottawa–Orléans, who spent most of her time actually talking about our leader. I think that's probably because she doesn't want to talk about her own leader. If you had approval ratings like the Premier currently has, I wouldn't want to talk about her either. I almost wouldn't want to even mention who our leader is, if I was on that side of the House over there. The approval ratings are not very good at all.

You know what? Nobody addressed—from the government, anyway—the comments made by their former colleague, one of their party leaders, one of the top, top people in the party, Mr. Greg Sorbara, when he was on The Agenda and spoke about what this cap-and-trade is all about. This is one of their own saying this. This isn't Jack Mintz or some expert from outside of politics. This is a former leader in that party, Greg Sorbara, talking about the fact that all this is is an opportunity to build more bureaucracy and grab cash, because we know that this Liberal Party, this government, is starving for more cash that they can spend on their pet projects.

I would also like to thank the member from Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry and my colleague from eastern Ontario. He was talking about the fact that the policies of this government continue to make it more expensive to live in Ontario. The policies of this government are creating more poor people. The policies of this government are driving up the cost of energy. They're driving up the cost of living.

We really do need a change of government in 2018, and we're going to get one with Patrick Brown as the new Premier of Ontario.

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

Mr. Wayne Gates: As always, I'm pleased to be able to rise today and speak to Bill 172.

Speaker, as you and all the members of this House know, I and the Ontario NDP support cap-and-trade. We understand that without a concerted effort from municipal, provincial and federal governments, as well as many partners, climate change will continue to get worse.

New Democrats understand that if we're going to ensure that the planet we inherited from our parents and our grandparents is the same one we'll leave to our chil-

dren and grandchildren, then now is the time for action. Bold, effective action is needed now.

In my riding of Niagara Falls, in Fort Erie and Niagara-on-the-Lake, our economy is driven in large part by two main sectors: tourism and agriculture. Of course, both of these sectors of our economy can be heavily impacted by climate change.

According to a 2012 report released by the Environmental Sustainability Research Centre at Brock University, entitled *Adapting to Climate Change: Challenges for Niagara*, our region can expect to see—listen to this—a 20% decrease in summer rainfall by 2050 and a three- to four-degree temperature increase. The growth in the conditions that give rise to thunderstorms, with a likely increase in heavy rains, lightning strikes, high winds, and hail storms, would have a serious impact on agriculture in Niagara and the jobs that they create. A decrease in summer rainfall combined with an increase in temperature and an increased condition for heavy rain and thunderstorms sounds to me like the conditions necessary for droughts and floods, not for sustainable agriculture.

1720

The report goes on to say that farmers in the Niagara region can also expect more negative impacts. They should expect shorter growing seasons for Niagara's ice wine. Think about that. They should expect an increase in invasive weed species and agricultural pests. They should expect increased crop damage from unpredictable freezing rain and freeze-thaw cycles. The report also mentions that greenhouse operators should expect increased cooling requirements and energy costs to run their greenhouses. That is a serious issue. My riding has already seen some greenhouse operators forced to relocate to the United States because of the rising cost of power. Now, with a fire sale of Hydro One proceeding against the wishes of 85% of Ontarians and the effects of climate change, this is only going to get worse for my riding.

Our leader, Andrea Horwath, and the New Democrats support a cap-and-trade system in Ontario. We want to see a cap-and-trade system put in place that is fair, that is effective and that is transparent. Unfortunately, in the bill before us today, the cap-and-trade system that is outlined falls short of these goals. Once again, we have a bill before us that makes for great messaging and photo opportunities and that will sound great at the doorsteps, but that falls short on critical measures that would make it fair, effective, and transparent.

I would like to take a moment to discuss exactly how the bill falls short in each of these particular areas. Let's start by talking about whether or not this version of cap-and-trade is fair for all Ontarians.

I think a good place to start is by defining what I mean when I say "fair." The Ontario NDP believes that any cap-and-trade system that is enacted in our province must not put undue burden on low-income Ontarians or Ontarians with little control over their emissions. The people of northern Ontario, the people who live in our rural communities, the people who don't have transit or clean energy: Those are the people we must ensure are not

forced to pay undue shares in this plan. Rather than forcing these people to pay more, the government should be working with them to reduce their carbon footprint, to make sure they can get to clean energy and technology, and to help them financially as they transition into a green economy.

Instead, the Liberals are telling the people of northern Ontario that they will have to pay an additional 4.3 cents per litre of gasoline while the biggest polluters in our province get a four-year holiday from the cap-and-trade plan. I don't believe—and I don't believe anyone in this chamber would say—that that's fair for the people of northern Ontario or the people that live in rural communities. It's not fair to the people who have no other option than to drive their cars. So this cap-and-trade plan before us today fails the question of fairness.

What about the question of effectiveness? Is this cap-and-trade plan going to be effective?

Well, 10 years ago, the Quebec government announced its climate change action plan to much fanfare. Their plan included more tools to help reduce greenhouse gas emissions than the plan we see before us today. And did it work? Unfortunately, the answer is that it didn't work as they had expected. Instead of hitting the targets they set for themselves, they were only able to reduce their greenhouse gas emissions by about 10% of the original goal. What does that mean for us? It means that we're not off to a very good start.

Mr. Speaker, the plan we see before us today promises even greater reductions in greenhouse gas emissions than the Quebec plan did. It promises even greater reductions but provides few tools to enable that to happen. It promises greater reductions but has no targets attached to the \$325-million worth of programs that are supposed to be funded from the cap-and-trade revenue.

This is a critical point. The government is committed to investing \$325 million from cap-and-trade revenues into the program to help reduce greenhouse gases. There are some decent proposals among those programs, but the problem is that none of those programs have targets for reductions attached to them. How can the government expect measures to be effective or not in a given program when they haven't even set what the goal of that program is to begin with?

So is this plan effective? Well, the truth is that only time will answer that question in full. But so far, the signs do not look good.

The Ontario NDP and our leader, Andrea Horwath, know that if this plan is going to stand up to public scrutiny, and if this plan is going to actually work to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, the money from this plan needs to go into a separate account for greenhouse gas reductions. That account needs to be separately and transparently audited, and it needs to be directly connected to targeted, measurable and independently verifiable greenhouse gas reductions.

Unfortunately, the plan before us today falls short of that standard. The plan before us today is not transparent,

it's not fair to the people of Ontario and there are many signs that point to it not being effective.

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

Mr. Joe Dickson: I just want to pass on a couple of words, if I may. I had the opportunity this year to be in a number of countries, and Italy was one of them, but in particular I was at the Vatican for about four days. We had the good fortune to sit very, very close to the Pope through some miracle, I guess. I have to tell you that, during that time, Pope Francis was addressing his papal encyclical. There were also other particular people there and there were people there from the United Nations—one guest speaker who spoke on behalf of the world to the congregation. There were probably only a couple of hundred or thousand people there. There were not that many that day. But I have to tell you, what happened that day is he made a statement. It was the very same statement that Premier Wynne and Minister Murray, our Minister of the Environment and Climate Change, have been talking about and it's being accepted worldwide. It doesn't seem to be accepted to a large extent in this forum.

I want to read to you the appeal of Pope Francis—just a couple of sentences: “The urgent challenge to protect our common home includes a concern to bring the whole human family together to seek a sustainable and integral development, for we know that things can change. The creator does not abandon us; he never forsakes his loving plan or repents of having created us. Humanity still has the ability to work together in building our common home. Here I want to recognize, encourage and thank all those striving in countless ways to guarantee the protection of the home which we share. Particular appreciation is owed to those who tirelessly seek to resolve the tragic effects of environmental degradation on the lives of the world's poorest. Young people demand change. They wonder how anyone can claim to be building a better future without thinking of the environment crisis and the sufferings of the excluded.”

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

Mr. Victor Fedeli: There seems to be some question on the other side of the House, so let me repeat what I had said earlier about Bill 172.

Speaker, this is nothing more than a cash grab from the Liberal Party, looking for \$1.9 billion. If anybody has any question about that, all they have to do is look at the budget. That \$1.9 billion is put right into general revenue.

They can continue to pretend what the money is used for, but we all know because they did the same thing with the Hydro sale when they took the money and, in Bill 144, allowed themselves to reimburse themselves for monies already spent on transit and infrastructure. That's why they were able to say, “We're going to use the Hydro funds for transit and infrastructure.” They did, but

then they took the money already budgeted out. They're doing exactly the same thing again.

They put a clause in this bill. All 55 pages are a lot of words, except the real sentence we need to realize just exactly what they did. The Hydro One sentence was buried: “to reimburse the crown for expenditures incurred by the crown, directly or indirectly for any purpose described in paragraph 2.” Paragraph 2 sends you to schedule 1, and schedule 1, on page 55, is very clear that the things they can reimburse themselves for are “public transit vehicles and infrastructure that reduce greenhouse gas emissions.”

Now, I know they don't like that. They got caught again doing this. This is exactly what they tried to do: pull the wool over everyone's eyes on the Hydro One sale. It didn't work. The Financial Accountability Officer caught them then, and it caught them already on this one.

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

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Along the same lines as my colleague, the member from Nipissing: We've asked this question tonight in this debate several times and we've yet to hear a definitive answer from the government. I gather that we're going to have to move on.

Mr. Randy Hillier: Don't give up, Taras. Don't give up.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Well, you know what? We already know the answer, obviously. They are conspicuous in their reluctance to give us an answer on that.

In December, roughly 190 countries signed on to the Paris climate accord to limit their greenhouse gas emissions to the aspirational goal of no more than 1.5 degrees Celsius. If we are to do that—what that number equates to in terms of how much fossil fuel we can't burn—it actually equates to about 80% of the known fossil fuel reserves on the planet, which already make up a massive portion of the balance sheet of companies, of nation states, of royalties that are already banked on.

The value of that asset, which would then have to be a stranded asset—again, if we are not to exceed the 1.5- or 2-degree threshold—is roughly \$50 trillion. To put this into perspective, the financial collapse of 2008 was a global economic catastrophe that is valued at around \$11 trillion. Multiply that by about five or six times conservatively, Speaker. This is the enormity of the situation that we're dealing with.

We have to have substance in our policies—effectiveness, clarity and fairness—or else we're going to get it wrong.

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

Ms. Ann Hoggarth: I've heard members around the House, mostly from the other side, saying that this bill is going to cost people money. Well, I have to say that climate change is already costing the people of Ontario. It has devastated communities. It has damaged homes, infrastructure, businesses and crops, and increased insurance rates. It also costs more for any kind of vegetables or fruits that are imported. California used to

be the breadbasket of North America. The drought is so bad that we don't have a lot of products coming from there. When they do come, they cost a lot of money.

Ontario's cap-and-trade program will help fight against climate change by creating a carbon market that gives polluters an incentive to cut greenhouse gas emissions and develop cleaner, greener technologies. We know that cap-and-trade is the right thing to do for our environment and for the economy. According to modelling results by EnviroEconomics, a prominent economics consultancy, cap-and-trade is expected to have a significant impact on Ontario's GDP, consistent with the experience in Quebec and California. We're not the first ones out of the gate on this, but we have to catch up.

After introducing its cap-and-trade program and putting a price on carbon, California's economy grew at a pace that exceeded the growth of the rest of the US economy. The number of jobs in California grew by almost 3.3% in the first year and a half of the program, outstripping the national rate of job creation, which was 2.5% over the same period.

Ontario is well positioned to seize the opportunities of a low-carbon economy if we are prepared to take this bold action. I urge you to support this bill.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Niagara Falls has two minutes.

Mr. Wayne Gates: I guess one thing that has really come out over the last few hours is the \$1.9-billion slush fund. It has been asked by us and asked by the PCs, so I'm going to ask one of the members from the opposition, from Ottawa South, who's a relatively honest gentleman. Maybe he could give us an answer at some point in time. Maybe he'll give us an answer. Just putting it out there.

Mr. John Fraser: Relatively?

Mr. Wayne Gates: You shouldn't turn red on that; that's a compliment.

I want to finish up by saying that climate change is real. We have a situation today where our food supply is being threatened. It's in jeopardy. I've always said, not just in this House but for a long time, that if you're a country that can't feed itself, you're a country that's going to be in trouble.

I want to say to everybody, thank you very much for your comments. I think we have to get this right. I've said it before and I'll say it again: Our kids, our grandkids and the future of the planet are relying on every country around the world to get it right, and we have to get it right here. Thank you very much for a few minutes of your time. I appreciate it.

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

Mr. Rick Nicholls: It's my pleasure to rise today and to add my remarks to the debate of Bill 172, the Climate Change Mitigation and Low-carbon Economy Act, 2016.

Lake Erie is my personal favourite of all the Great Lakes. There's a reason for that. It should come as no surprise, as my riding is located on its spectacular north shore. Early on in my political career, the lake that I had so often enjoyed as a youngster became a massive issue.

The year: 2012. The weekend: Labour Day. A massive fish kill occurred along the shores of Lake Erie in the Rondeau area over that Labour Day weekend. The impacted species included bottom feeders such as sheepshead, catfish, carp, perch and suckers. All told, thousands of fish died, and the affected area stretched roughly 40 kilometres.

Initially it was believed to have been caused by natural causes such as lake inversion. This occurs when the colder, low-oxygen water is stirred up. However, concerned first and foremost with the health and safety of my constituents, I pressed the Ministry of the Environment to consider all possible causes until an exact cause could be determined. If the cause was not natural, we needed to find out quickly so more fish would not be harmed and human health would not be jeopardized.

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To his credit, the member for St. Catharines, who was the Minister of the Environment at that time, kept me in the loop and took the concerns of both myself and my community seriously. Now, events like these demonstrate just how important our environment and the Great Lakes specifically are to all Ontarians. Quite simply, we rely on our environment to live.

All this is to say that I've had a lifelong appreciation for the unique environment that we enjoy here in Ontario, especially the beautiful shorelines of the great riding of Chatham-Kent-Essex. Working to protect the environment is something I learned early on as an MPP. That's why I'm proud of the fact that our party is also committing to bold action when it comes to tackling the challenge of climate change and protecting that which we love dearly; that is, the environment.

We want to do it in such a way that we will not see government reaching its hand into the wallets of each and every Ontarian, free to spend the billions generated as it sees fit with little public oversight. I've heard a lot of criticism of the government's cap-and-trade scheme in my riding.

Union Gas, which is in fact headquartered in Chatham, is a major employer in my riding. They contribute greatly to both our local economy and a number of charitable causes. They've suggested a number of measures to ease the burden for consumers. Having no interest in easing the burden for consumers, the government evidently ignored these sorts of causes for concern.

The following is taken from a Union Gas release expressing concerns over the Liberal cap-and-trade plan:

"According to ICF International ... there will be an immediate impact on natural gas and gasoline costs for households and businesses that will grow over time:

"—Households: about \$160 a year in 2017, increasing to over \$850 by 2030;

"—small businesses" can expect this year "about \$170,000 a year ... increasing to over \$900,000 by 2030;

"—and there will be added costs for necessities like food which rely on carbon-based energy for their production and distribution."

But Union Gas also likes to present a very fair, sound, balanced approach, so therefore, they raised some suggestions as well. Here's what they say: "Initial cost-free allowances for natural gas distributors and a slight delay to 2018 for implementation, similar to what was done in California and Quebec, will give consumers time to better understand the changes and to make the behavioural adjustments necessary for the government's new emission reduction measures to begin to have an effect."

Here's what Steve Baker, president of Union Gas, went on to say: "We hope to work constructively with the provincial government toward a final framework that will help achieve our environmental goals without sacrificing the social and economic well-being of the province." That's exactly what I want to see as well.

I do feel it's noteworthy and worth celebrating that all three parties have agreed that climate change—or changes in climate—is real and we need to come together to do something about it. It's something that I assume the government would be happy to see, but instead, they're more focused on playing political games.

We know why they want to talk about anything other than their own record in power: The Liberal government has an awful track record when it comes to accountability and transparency. The Liberal government wants to make money off climate change because they have run our province's finances right into the ground.

They want to spend the \$1.9 billion their plan will generate as they see fit, without opening the doors wide to basic and necessary public scrutiny. Have they earned the trust? I'd say that no government ever deserves the blind trust that the Ontario Liberals are demanding, especially when it comes to billions of dollars. So let's see if they've earned the benefit of doubt when it comes to these sorts of things.

Well, you can look at the case of Drive Clean, which is legally forbidden from generating a profit for the government. The Liberals said it would not generate a profit. The law said it was not allowed to generate a profit. The program could not generate more than it cost. That seems pretty clear to me. But guess what happened? The Liberals ignored the law, or simply didn't notice it was broken, and the program pulled in millions of dollars more than it cost.

We've seen, through the billions squandered on eHealth and Ornge scandals, what this government is capable of when money is spent without any oversight. Who can forget the time when the Liberals created a health tax to support health care, and then just put the money into general revenue?

Let's look at how truthful they've been in the past when it comes to telling Ontarians how much things will cost. Remember, this is the same government, Speaker, who had numerous members stand in the Legislature and say—through their teeth, I imagine—that cancelled gas plants would only cost Ontario \$40 million. I was in estimates when myself and two of my colleagues challenged the then Minister of Finance, and that's what he said. They were only slightly off with their estimates,

and as we all know, the final bill came in at over \$1 billion. A lot of people have trouble putting such a large number into perspective, so you could almost say that it ended up costing a few times more than the average Ontario winter hydro bill. Keep that in mind when you hear the Liberals tell you that there's barely going to be an impact on your wallet with their latest scheme. We've all heard that one before. The same government that said that cancelling the gas plants will only cost \$40 million, when it actually cost taxpayers \$1 billion, is now saying their plan will only cause the price of gas to go up by 4.3 cents per litre. Anybody still believe it?

In my riding of Chatham–Kent–Essex, my constituents are very concerned about a hike in gas prices, as the distance they have to travel requires them to move by car. That's the transit system in rural Ontario. The Chatham–Kent Chamber of Commerce raised this concern, stating, "Given our unique geographic size, driving to and from work is a necessity and not a luxury. We do not have a mass transit infrastructure. We are being penalized as a result of our geographic makeup. Any increase to gasoline prices is going to be felt throughout the local economy, including the cost of food at our grocery store and especially with produce."

I cannot support a plan that makes life more expensive for my constituents without corresponding tax cuts for individuals or businesses. We need a revenue-neutral carbon price with transparent and independent oversight to ensure there are actually results in emission reductions with steps to ease the financial impact on citizens. Speaker, the Liberal plan is none of those things.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Todd Smith): Questions and comments?

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Thanks to the member from Chatham–Kent–Essex, who, again, raised many of the concerns we've heard all night here but have yet to have answered in a substantive way by any member of the government benches. These are real, pressing concerns and legitimate concerns that people—again, don't take it from us, which I think is what the member has said. Take it from the people in our communities who are expressing reservation, some hesitation and cynicism around how the Liberal government can initiate a plan, given their absolute failure and ineptitude to deliver real results on all other scopes and schemes that we've seen come through this House. Their financial and fiscal responsibility has been lacklustre, at best. It has harmed regional economies. It has picked winners and losers and left many, many Ontarians struggling. Again, there's no recognition that their policies have had anything, by their account, other than a great, great effect.

So I'll say that I'm looking for a government—especially on this issue, being so complex, so transformative—that is going to consult, going to recognize that they might not have it right the first time, as we know, as their track record should show and would clearly show. They should consult and they should take the best evidence that is put forward. When we're highlighting that revenue streams need to be directed specifically

towards reducing greenhouse gases, then give us the evidence that that is actually going to happen.

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The Acting Speaker (Mr. Todd Smith): Further questions and comments?

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: Thank you, and publicly I'd say you fit the chair perfectly, Speaker. You're doing a great job.

A little bit of comment on the great member from Chatham-Kent: I want to say, not just in this 10 minutes but in general, the time spent on debate from the opposition has been a lot about—not necessarily about this bill, although a little bit—partisan politics. We talked about all sorts of different things.

I understand the role. I've said this before and I'll say it again. I understand the role of the opposition, but I would hope we would focus on the proposed legislation that we're talking about.

We get a lot of criticism when we have to put time allocation in place to get some legislation done. I hear from the opposition: "Well, we need time to debate this. Every member wants to speak about it." And then, when that opportunity is afforded the opposition, they wander way off kilter.

The other piece that I would hope, when we're debating a piece of legislation—yes, be critical about things that you feel strongly about, and I said that a number of times, but give us some concrete ideas of where you think it should go. I don't hear any of that. I just hear about criticism.

Frankly, I don't blame them for not giving us any suggestions because I think that's pretty hollow on the other side. They can't make up their minds. One day they support it, and another day they don't. But I would say that before you stand up and debate, please give us some real, strong ideas on how to make things better.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Todd Smith): Questions and comments?

Mr. Randy Hillier: I listened to the debate and then the comments and I have to just say, I guess the member from Northumberland-Quinte West was sleeping for the afternoon and woke up and didn't know where he was. He started going on that our party was not talking about the bill. Of course, that's all we've been talking about. Then he launched into the fact that we were being partisan and we're not offering up solutions.

The member from Northumberland-Quinte West ought to take a look at the standing orders and understand what debate is all about and what the role of the opposition party is. It's to be critical and to hold the government to account. Before you go to sleep next time, get the standing orders out, do some reading and see what debate is all about.

I will say that this bill does pick winners. The member from Essex said that it picks winners and losers. I want to say to you, Speaker, this bill picks winners and creates losers. That's what this bill is doing. It's a \$1.9-billion grab. As I explained yesterday, we keep squeezing the people in this province. We keep raising the cost of living

and reducing our growth. I gave those numbers yesterday to everyone in the House. They're in the budget. It's very simple to see that prosperity has been flat, something like the member from Northumberland-Quinte West's comment.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Timmins-James Bay.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: We need to recognize, all of us, that there needs to be something done for what's going on in our environment and what those emissions do in harming our environment.

I just want to point out to those who may still be skeptical: Look at what happened in the town of Sudbury back in the 1970s. It was essentially where, in the 1960s, you went in order to practise moonwalking. Why? The Apollo program went there because Sudbury looked like the top of the moon. Essentially, it was devastated by acid rain and what was coming out of the emissions of those smelters that, quite frankly, killed all the vegetation for miles around the city of Sudbury.

The government of the day, federally and provincially, and the American government, entered into an agreement in order to be able to deal with acid rain and those types of emissions—as we call them, NO_x and SO_x—and put in place a type of cap-and-trade system—more cap than trade—that essentially set limits to what we were able to discharge into the atmosphere.

As a result, when you look at Sudbury today, it is like night and day. Sudbury is a green city. You would never know it, if you looked at a picture of Sudbury from the 1960s when the Apollo astronauts went out there to practise walking on the moon, if you looked at that picture of those astronauts like Neil Armstrong and Buzz Aldrin and Conrad and others who stood in Sudbury, practising walking on the moon because it looked like a moonscape environment.

If you were to bring those astronauts back, they would think, "My God, where are we? We have gone to a new planet. It's green. It's wonderful. It's changed." And why? Because we decided, as a society, that there was a necessity to do this, that we needed to make sure that we protect our environment. At the end of the day, it has not been a negative drain on the economy; it's been positive for the city of Sudbury and the area. What we have done when it comes to acid rain is essentially to deal with what was a tragedy and turn it into a real victory.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Chatham-Kent-Essex has two minutes.

Mr. Rick Nicholls: First of all, I would like to thank the members from Essex, Northumberland-Quinte West, Lanark-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington and, of course, the member from Timmins-James Bay.

The member from Essex talked about people and their reservations and their cynicism. Quite frankly, we on this side of the House understand that. We understand the fact that people are somewhat cynical and have some strong reservations. It's kind of like fool me once, shame on you, but fool me twice, shame on me.

The Northumberland-Quinte West member—first of all, he's a great judge of character. He was talking about

the time allocation and rushing through. Well, we feel that they're rushing through without proper consultation, other than maybe touching base with a gentleman by the name of Al Gore.

Again, one of the things that I'm concerned about as well is the fact that they don't tell us what the impact is. We need the finer details. We need more details, because they don't tell us what's the impact on—and I was listening to the member from Niagara Falls, because I know he has strong union affiliations and I respect that. So what's the impact going to be on the automotive industry? What's the impact going to be on the tire manufacturers? What's the impact going to be on the steel industry? Because, again, they have large carbon footprints. What are they going to do?

Of course, we have heard about Marchionne, the chief executive officer of Fiat Chrysler, and he's got some very serious concerns about that as well.

This government may be picking winners and losers—who will have to pay and who will not have to pay—in our opinion. That's not fair, because ultimately what happens is that it's the consumer who is going to be paying more because of the fact that these companies will have to pay big bucks for their carbon footprint.

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

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): It being one minute to six, this House stands adjourned until 9 o'clock tomorrow morning.

The House adjourned at 1759.

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Chiarelli, Hon. / L'hon. Bob (LIB)	Ottawa West–Nepean / Ottawa-Ouest–Nepean	Minister of Energy / Ministre de l'Énergie
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Coe, Lorne (PC)	Whitby–Oshawa	
Colle, Mike (LIB)	Eglinton–Lawrence	
Coteau, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Don Valley East / Don Valley-Est	Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport / Ministre du Tourisme, de la Culture et du Sport Minister Responsible for Anti-Racism Minister Responsible for the 2015 Pan and Parapan American Games / Ministre responsable des Jeux panaméricains et parapanaméricains de 2015
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Damerla, Hon. / L'hon. Dipika (LIB)	Mississauga East–Cooksville / Mississauga-Est–Cooksville	Associate Minister of Health and Long-Term Care (Long-Term Care and Wellness) / Ministre associée de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée (Soins de longue durée et Promotion du mieux-être) Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille Minister of Transportation / Ministre des Transports
Del Duca, Hon. / L'hon. Steven (LIB)	Vaughan	
Delaney, Bob (LIB)	Mississauga–Streetsville	
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Dickson, Joe (LIB)	Ajax–Pickering	
DiNovo, Cheri (NDP)	Parkdale–High Park	
Dong, Han (LIB)	Trinity–Spadina	
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Hardeman, Ernie (PC)	Oxford	
Harris, Michael (PC)	Kitchener–Conestoga	
Hatfield, Percy (NDP)	Windsor–Tecumseh	
Hillier, Randy (PC)	Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington	
Hoggarth, Ann (LIB)	Barrie	
Horwath, Andrea (NDP)	Hamilton Centre / Hamilton-Centre	Leader, Recognized Party / Chef de parti reconnu Leader, New Democratic Party of Ontario / Chef du Nouveau parti démocratique de l'Ontario
Hoskins, Hon. / L'hon. Eric (LIB)	St. Paul's	Minister of Health and Long-Term Care / Ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée
Hudak, Tim (PC)	Niagara West–Glanbrook / Niagara- Ouest–Glanbrook	
Hunter, Hon. / L'hon. Mitzie (LIB)	Scarborough–Guildwood	Associate Minister of Finance (Ontario Retirement Pension Plan) / Ministre associée des Finances (Régime de retraite de la province de l'Ontario)
Jaczek, Hon. / L'hon. Helena (LIB)	Oak Ridges–Markham	Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille Minister of Community and Social Services / Ministre des Services sociaux et communautaires
Jones, Sylvia (PC)	Dufferin–Caledon	Deputy Leader, Official Opposition / Chef adjointe de l'opposition officielle
Kiwala, Sophie (LIB)	Kingston and the Islands / Kingston et les Îles	
Kwinter, Monte (LIB)	York Centre / York-Centre	
Lalonde, Marie-France (LIB)	Ottawa–Orléans	
Leal, Hon. / L'hon. Jeff (LIB)	Peterborough	Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs / Ministre de l'Agriculture, de l'Alimentation et des Affaires rurales
Levac, Hon. / L'hon. Dave (LIB)	Brant	Speaker / Président de l'Assemblée législative
MacCharles, Hon. / L'hon. Tracy (LIB)	Pickering–Scarborough East / Pickering–Scarborough-Est	Minister of Children and Youth Services / Ministre des Services à l'enfance et à la jeunesse Minister Responsible for Women's Issues / Ministre déléguée à la Condition féminine
MacLaren, Jack (PC)	Carleton–Mississippi Mills	
MacLeod, Lisa (PC)	Nepean–Carleton	
Malhi, Harinder (LIB)	Brampton–Springdale	
Mangat, Amrit (LIB)	Mississauga–Brampton South / Mississauga–Brampton-Sud	
Mantha, Michael (NDP)	Algoma–Manitoulin	
Martins, Cristina (LIB)	Davenport	
Martow, Gila (PC)	Thornhill	
Matthews, Hon. / L'hon. Deborah (LIB)	London North Centre / London- Centre-Nord	Deputy Premier / Vice-première ministre Minister Responsible for the Poverty Reduction Strategy / Ministre responsable de la Stratégie de réduction de la pauvreté President of the Treasury Board / Présidente du Conseil du Trésor
Mauro, Hon. / L'hon. Bill (LIB)	Thunder Bay–Atikokan	Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry / Ministre des Richesses naturelles et des Forêts
McDonnell, Jim (PC)	Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry	
McGarry, Kathryn (LIB)	Cambridge	
McMahon, Eleanor (LIB)	Burlington	
McMeekin, Hon. / L'hon. Ted (LIB)	Ancaster–Dundas–Flamborough– Westdale	Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / Ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement
McNaughton, Monte (PC)	Lambton–Kent–Middlesex	

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Meilleur, Hon. / L'hon. Madeleine (LIB)	Ottawa–Vanier	Attorney General / Procureure générale Minister Responsible for Francophone Affairs / Ministre déléguée aux Affaires francophones
Milczyn, Peter Z. (LIB)	Etobicoke–Lakeshore	
Miller, Norm (PC)	Parry Sound–Muskoka	
Miller, Paul (NDP)	Hamilton East–Stoney Creek / Hamilton-Est–Stoney Creek	Third Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Troisième vice-président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Moridi, Hon. / L'hon. Reza (LIB)	Richmond Hill	Minister of Research and Innovation / Ministre de la Recherche et de l'Innovation Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities / Ministre de la Formation et des Collèges et Universités
Munro, Julia (PC)	York–Simcoe	
Murray, Hon. / L'hon. Glen R. (LIB)	Toronto Centre / Toronto-Centre	Minister of the Environment and Climate Change / Ministre de l'Environnement et de l'Action en matière de changement climatique
Naidoo-Harris, Indira (LIB)	Halton	
Naqvi, Hon. / L'hon. Yasir (LIB)	Ottawa Centre / Ottawa-Centre	Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services / Ministre de la Sécurité communautaire et des Services correctionnels Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire du gouvernement
Natyshak, Taras (NDP)	Essex	
Nicholls, Rick (PC)	Chatham–Kent–Essex	Second Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Deuxième vice-président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Oraziotti, Hon. / L'hon. David (LIB)	Sault Ste. Marie	Minister of Government and Consumer Services / Ministre des Services gouvernementaux et des Services aux consommateurs
Pettapiece, Randy (PC)	Perth–Wellington	
Potts, Arthur (LIB)	Beaches–East York	
Qaadri, Shafiq (LIB)	Etobicoke North / Etobicoke-Nord	
Rinaldi, Lou (LIB)	Northumberland–Quinte West	
Sandals, Hon. / L'hon. Liz (LIB)	Guelph	Minister of Education / Ministre de l'Éducation
Sattler, Peggy (NDP)	London West / London-Ouest	
Scott, Laurie (PC)	Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock	Deputy Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjointe de l'opposition officielle
Sergio, Hon. / L'hon. Mario (LIB)	York West / York-Ouest	Minister Responsible for Seniors Affairs Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille Deputy Leader, Recognized Party / Chef adjoint du gouvernement
Singh, Jagmeet (NDP)	Bramalea–Gore–Malton	
Smith, Todd (PC)	Prince Edward–Hastings	
Sousa, Hon. / L'hon. Charles (LIB)	Mississauga South / Mississauga-Sud	Minister of Finance / Ministre des Finances
Tabuns, Peter (NDP)	Toronto–Danforth	
Takhar, Harinder S. (LIB)	Mississauga–Erindale	
Taylor, Monique (NDP)	Hamilton Mountain	
Thibeault, Glenn (LIB)	Sudbury	
Thompson, Lisa M. (PC)	Huron–Bruce	
Vanthof, John (NDP)	Timiskaming–Cochrane	
Vernile, Daiene (LIB)	Kitchener Centre / Kitchener-Centre	
Walker, Bill (PC)	Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound	
Wilson, Jim (PC)	Simcoe–Grey	Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire de l'opposition officielle
Wong, Soo (LIB)	Scarborough–Agincourt	
Wynne, Hon. / L'hon. Kathleen O. (LIB)	Don Valley West / Don Valley-Ouest	Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs / Ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales Premier / Première ministre Leader, Liberal Party of Ontario / Chef du Parti libéral de l'Ontario
Yakabuski, John (PC)	Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke	
Yurek, Jeff (PC)	Elgin–Middlesex–London	
Zimmer, Hon. / L'hon. David (LIB)	Willowdale	Minister of Aboriginal Affairs / Ministre des Affaires autochtones

**STANDING COMMITTEES OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
COMITÉS PERMANENTS DE L'ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE**

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Bas Balkissoon, Chris Ballard
Grant Crack, Cheri DiNovo
Han Dong, Michael Harris
Sophie Kiwala, Todd Smith
Monique Taylor
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Eric Rennie

**Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs /
Comité permanent des finances et des affaires économiques**

Chair / Présidente: Soo Wong
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Peter Z. Milczyn
Laura Albanese, Yvan Baker
Toby Barrett, Victor Fedeli
Catherine Fife, Ann Hoggarth
Peter Z. Milczyn, Daiene Vernile
Soo Wong
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Eric Rennie

**Standing Committee on General Government / Comité
permanent des affaires gouvernementales**

Chair / Président: Grant Crack
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Joe Dickson
Mike Colle, Grant Crack
Joe Dickson, Lisa Gretzky
Ann Hoggarth, Sophie Kiwala
Jim McDonnell, Eleanor McMahon
Lisa M. Thompson
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Sylwia Przewdziecki

**Standing Committee on Government Agencies / Comité
permanent des organismes gouvernementaux**

Chair / Président: John Fraser
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Cristina Martins
Robert Bailey, Vic Dhillon
John Fraser, Wayne Gates
Marie-France Lalonde, Harinder Malhi
Cristina Martins, Randy Pettapiece
Lou Rinaldi
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Sylwia Przewdziecki

**Standing Committee on Justice Policy / Comité permanent de
la justice**

Chair / Président: Shafiq Qadri
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Lorenzo Berardinetti
Lorenzo Berardinetti, Bob Delaney
Randy Hillier, Michael Mantha
Cristina Martins, Indira Naidoo-Harris
Arthur Potts, Shafiq Qadri
Laurie Scott
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Christopher Tyrell

**Standing Committee on the Legislative Assembly / Comité
permanent de l'Assemblée législative**

Chair / Président: Monte McNaughton
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

**Standing Committee on Public Accounts / Comité permanent
des comptes publics**

Chair / Président: Ernie Hardeman
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Lisa MacLeod
Han Dong, John Fraser
Ernie Hardeman, Percy Hatfield
Lisa MacLeod, Harinder Malhi
Julia Munro, Arthur Potts
Lou Rinaldi
Committee Clerk / 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
Jagmeet Singh, Peter Tabuns
Glenn Thibeault
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