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des débats
(Hansard)**

Wednesday 5 October 2016

Mercredi 5 octobre 2016

Speaker
Honourable Dave Levac

Président
L'honorable Dave Levac

Clerk
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Deborah Deller

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Wednesday 5 October 2016

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mercredi 5 octobre 2016

The House met at 0900.

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

Prayers.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

BURDEN REDUCTION ACT, 2016 LOI DE 2016 SUR L'ALLÈGEMENT DU FARDEAU RÉGLEMENTAIRE

Resuming the debate adjourned on October 4, 2016, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 27, An Act to reduce the regulatory burden on business, to enact various new Acts and to make other amendments and repeals / Projet de loi 27, Loi visant à alléger le fardeau réglementaire des entreprises, à édicter diverses lois et à modifier et abroger d'autres lois.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): When we last debated this issue, the Minister of Economic Development and Growth had the floor. Minister?

Hon. Brad Duguid: Thank you so much, Mr. Speaker. Out of respect for all of you in this Legislature, and knowing that my parliamentary assistant is much more eloquent than I am on her feet in this Legislature, I had the opportunity to speak at the outset of the introduction of second reading of this bill yesterday and was able to put forward what I consider some of the priorities for our government in terms of reducing regulatory burden.

Our goal, really, is to make Ontario the easiest place in the world in which to do business. We're well on the way to getting there. We still have work to do. It's an ongoing battle and something that is one of those continuous-improvement type of programs. I touched on a few of the things that we were doing to get there. But, in lieu of the fact that most of the members in the Legislature have heard me speak on many things, many times and probably aren't too enthused to hear more, I'm going to pass on, as I said earlier, the rest of the time to my parliamentary assistant, the member from Davenport.

Mr. Speaker, it's for you to recognize the member from Davenport.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. The member from Davenport.

Mrs. Cristina Martins: Good morning, everyone. I'm very pleased to rise this morning as parliamentary assistant to the fabulous Minister of Economic Development and Growth. Thank you to the minister for his remarks and for introducing the second reading of this

important piece of legislation yesterday. The minister laid out a very clear and convincing case as to why these burden reduction efforts are essential to keep our economy competitive and open to business. He laid out clearly how this government is proposing to continue to build on its efforts in creating a business climate where business can thrive.

I know from the minister, from my own constituents and from my own career in business how important it is to have a modern, streamlined and efficient business climate. It's what helps to attract new businesses to Ontario and what helps the businesses that are already here to get products and services to consumers more efficiently and create more opportunity to invest in jobs and growth.

Mr. Speaker, as the minister outlined in his remarks, he and his team have consulted with an impressive number of stakeholders in the development of this bill, and we have received some resounding positive feedback from the business community and other stakeholders.

Here are just a few of the things that stakeholders had to say in support of the Burden Reduction Act. Plamen Petkov, the Ontario vice-president for the Canadian Federation of Independent Business, says, "The Ontario government continues to demonstrate that it is committed to reducing the regulatory burden on small business in the province. By mending several existing acts, the Burden Reduction Act lays the groundwork for achieving real and measurable regulatory relief."

Ian Howcroft, the Ontario vice-president of Canadian Manufacturers and Exporters, had this to say: "This will help to ensure Ontario's competitive position and continue to support a culture in which safety is everyone's priority. It is an example of how business and government can work together to develop a regulatory system that focuses on goals and results which reduces red tape and unnecessary burdens."

Similarly, Allan O'Dette, president and CEO of the Ontario Chamber of Commerce, said this: "The Burden Reduction Act will support the growth of Ontario's economy by removing many of the regulatory barriers that are challenging businesses in this province. Modernizing government and removing red tape are essential to innovation and growth. The chamber network has been a champion for many of the changes brought forward in this legislation. We encourage the business community to continue to push government to support burden reduction through participation in the Red Tape Challenge."

Lastly, Mark Nantais, the president of the Canadian Vehicle Manufacturers' Association, added the follow-

ing: “The Burden Reduction Act recognizes that Ontario manufacturing competes in a globally competitive market that now operates in a modern digital business environment.” It provides “long-term clarity in an ever-changing business environment by reducing regulatory complexity and cost, and avoiding a drag on productivity and competitiveness—all of which contributes to a more positive investment climate in Ontario.”

Here we have a number of highly influential and successful business leaders explaining just how important these efforts are to the business community. At the end of the day, Mr. Speaker, it’s important to remember what these efforts are really about. This is about ensuring we have a competitive business environment so that companies can invest here in Ontario and create and support jobs.

This really matters to people all over our province. We need to ensure we’re working with companies and other stakeholders to ensure we’re not perpetuating or creating overly cumbersome or unnecessary burdens to them doing business and supporting high-quality jobs.

We understand the power and importance of listening, which is why we’ve taken such a consultative approach to this process. Crucially, the minister pointed out yesterday we are doing that while also protecting environmental and health standards, and enhancing worker and consumer safety.

We know that some regulations are of course essential, but we know from speaking with stakeholders and consulting across ministries that there is still room to find efficiencies, both big and small. We have taken a holistic approach across government to find efficiencies for businesses and other stakeholders.

This bill proposes to make more than 150 amendments to more than 50 statutes, and I’d like to take this opportunity to highlight some of the burden reduction that will occur across 11 different ministries, should the Burden Reduction Act be passed.

One of the most significant ways we are reducing burdens on business is through the elimination of the Bulk Sales Act. The Bulk Sales Act was one that stakeholders repeatedly told us was outdated. It was originally designed to ensure that creditors were protected when a business sold off assets, but nowadays, creditors have access to a number of more effective ways to protect their interests, making the act redundant.

It was also expensive for the act to be administered, and every other Canadian jurisdiction has eliminated their version of this statutory vehicle. This was costing the government time and money. It isn’t protecting Ontarians in ways they were not already protected, and it is not beneficial to the economy, so we are eliminating it.

0910

We are also reducing the burdens on businesses who want to come to Ontario by incorporating recognized standards for international business dealings into law. Businesses would have the option of incorporating the standards into contracts, saving them the costs of negotiations over things like which electronic communications are recognized or which country’s court would be used to resolve a dispute.

As well, we are modernizing rules for commercial arbitration, which would make Ontario a more attractive jurisdiction for resolving cross-border disputes. In order to facilitate this, the bill would create five new acts: the International Choice of Court Agreements Convention Act, the International Commercial Arbitration Act, the International Electronic Communications Convention Act, the International Recognition of Trusts Act, and the International Sales Conventions Act. These acts would make it easier for businesses all over the world to understand how to play the game if they want to do business in Ontario.

Making it as easy as possible for investors to understand what they are getting themselves into by coming here is crucial if we want to continue to be a leader in Canada and in North America in terms of attracting foreign direct investment. These laws will mean that it is easier for Ontario companies to do business in places like the United States, the UK and Australia, and also for companies from emerging markets like those in eastern Europe, Africa and southeast Asia to bring jobs, growth, and economic development here. The bill also allows some really common-sense regulatory changes that make it easier for trained professionals to do their job.

I also want to highlight a couple of other examples. Currently, inspectors for the Minister of the Environment and Climate Change are required to request information from companies in face-to-face meetings. That means an inspector has to physically travel to a company to get an answer or a clarification on a particular item, regardless of how big or small it is. This bill, if passed, would allow inspectors to request information or seek clarification on specific matters, where appropriate, by phone or by email. This bill would also allow for the government to notify clients about applications made under the Fish and Wildlife Conservation Act, the Crown Forest Sustainability Act, the Public Lands Act and the Lakes and Rivers Improvement Act by email, rather than just by registered mail.

Additionally, this bill, if passed, will make it possible for more business activities to move to the Environmental Activity and Sector Registry, the online self-registration system available for certain low-risk activities. This would save stakeholders time and reduce complexity by providing an alternative streamlined method to conduct business in many circumstances. This is a clear example of the government being responsive to constructive commentary and suggestions from the community outside the walls of government.

This act, if passed, would also amend the Ontario Energy Board Act and the Electricity Act to empower the Ontario Energy Board to be more flexible. This new flexibility would help the OEB in its regulatory processes and reduce red tape for those participating in energy market. It would also strengthen the OEB’s consumer protection responsibilities to keep Ontarians safe.

One example of those responsibilities is to ensure that natural gas and electricity utilities are prohibited from disconnecting customers during certain times of the year, such as during winter months. We know how important it

is to ensure that Ontarians have access to the critical utilities they need for their daily lives and this change will help to protect some of Ontario's most vulnerable.

Furthermore, this act amends the Registered Human Resources Professionals Act to provide the authority for the Human Resources Professionals Association to regulate its members who conduct workplace investigations. The proposed amendment would give association members in good standing the authority to conduct investigations without having to get a private investigator's licence and be regulated by the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services through that ministry's licensing program. We have one of the most highly skilled workforces in the world, and the government should not be making it harder for Ontarians to do the job they are trained to do.

I also want to talk to you about the ways we are increasing protections for consumers through this bill. We're updating the Consumer Protection Act to broaden the type of information that can now be made publicly available about companies that have received compliance orders.

We're also creating a formal process of mediation for disputes between suppliers and consumers. In addition, we are updating the Land Titles Act to address increasingly sophisticated fraud situations and to help combat title fraud, including streamlining how easements are recorded in the land title system and how co-owners of property may give evidence of their percentage of ownership.

We are also streamlining the Technical Standards and Safety Act, providing a time limit for appeals of inspection orders, seals and fees under this act. This bill, if passed, would give them 90 days to file an appeal. These changes mean that the rights of consumers are better respected and that we can ensure their safety, which is one of our government's top priorities.

Mr. Speaker, one of the major initiatives we are taking through this, as well as other initiatives such as the strategic investments office, is making it easier for businesses to interact with government. That's why we are amending the Business Regulation Reform Act to require businesses to provide their business number during any interaction or registration with a government entity and to enable delegated administrative authorities and crown corporations to use the business number when working with businesses. Businesses having a unique identifier for when they interact with government can enable us as government to provide better services to businesses when they request it, in the same way that when you shop online, a store can remember your shipping information, or that Pizza Pizza can remember what you last ordered. Facilitating the process by which businesses can communicate with government will make it easier for them to spend less time filling out forms and get back to business.

Lastly, this bill also streamlines the functions of government to make us operate more efficiently. This bill gives to the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural

Affairs as well as the Minister of Northern Development and Mines the ability to establish or amend programs without the need for an order in council. While our current Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs and Minister of Northern Development and Mines are certainly doing an incredible job for their respective sectors and constituents, this will allow their ministries to better adapt to the changes in their sectors and provide better service overall.

This bill also clarifies the Provincial Offences Act to give municipalities more of the tools that they need to collect defaulted fines in full. This is great news for our municipal partners and continues our track record of making it easier for municipalities to provide services to their constituents.

As an MPP from a Toronto riding, Davenport, I should also note that this bill would clarify or correct various sections of the Highway Traffic Act to accommodate new TTC streetcars. And this updates the Ontario Place Corporation Act to help us implement our vision for the Ontario Place revitalization to turn it into a year-round, vibrant waterfront destination. These amendments would lower the cost and complexity of transactions for everyone involved in the revitalization and make it easier for the government to ensure that we are able to capitalize on the opportunity that a redeveloped Ontario Place would create for our city.

Lastly, this bill will help to streamline our justice system. This bill currently proposes several amendments the Courts of Justice Act and the Justices of the Peace Act to help our court system function more effectively and efficiently. These changes would include simplifying the court rules in provincial offences court, making it easier for them to adapt to changes in technology; creating the position of Small Claims Court administrative judge to improve our Small Claims Court processes and ensure that any dispute, big or small, is handled fairly and smoothly by our courts; and providing members of the judicial and justice of the peace appointments advisory committees immunity from liability for actions done in good faith. This makes it easier for us to recruit the best people to these appointments, which is so crucial for ensuring that we have the best and brightest adjudicating the law in this province.

These changes may not seem that significant, but ensuring our legal system is able to keep up with the times, is able to function smoothly and effectively, and that the right people are sitting on the bench means that we are able to provide better access to better justice for all Ontarians.

Mr. Speaker, as the minister highlighted yesterday, our government has an excellent track record when it comes to reducing red tape. Since 2014, we have saved businesses \$122 million and 5.4 million hours thanks to our red tape reduction efforts. This surpassed our self-initiated goal of saving businesses \$100 million by 2017.

0920

Thanks to this bill, if passed, and to the sum of our recent initiatives like the Red Tape Challenge, we'll be

able to make Ontario an even better place to live, to work, and certainly to invest and do business for years to come. We're committed to continuing our strong leadership on this front.

The Burden Reduction Act, if passed, would be the first part of an annual burden reduction process, serving as a model to meet a firm commitment to reduce burdens to Ontario businesses. This annual process would provide all ministries with a regular way to identify and reduce their burdens. These efforts are all part of Ontario's broader burden reduction ecosystem.

Mr. Speaker, we have completely transformed how this government cuts red tape. We have a wide spectrum of initiatives to help us in this effort. In 2008, we launched Ontario's Open for Business strategy, and since then, we have eliminated 80,000 regulatory burdens since 2008. That's 17% of all regulatory requirements.

Ontario's 2016 Burden Reduction Report profiles 26 initiatives across government, including 13 new projects resulting in \$47 million in cost savings, and \$24 million saved through 13 previously announced projects with ongoing impact. That report highlighted some interesting initiatives, including BizPaL, an online tool that provides customized lists of all permits, licences and requirements needed to register a business in Ontario, saving entrepreneurs \$27 million and thousands of hours over four years, and automating clearance certificates for construction contractors, saving contractors and their employers \$13 million and 545,000 hours over five years.

Another initiative was the simplification of vendor reporting and registration under the Assistive Devices Program, saving businesses \$2 million and 70,400 hours over one year.

These efforts tie into our broader efforts at spurring growth, helping Ontario companies scale up and fostering an innovative business climate. This government's Business Growth Initiative makes key investments in research and development and facilitates rapid access to capital. It helps small and mid-sized enterprises scale up. We have also taken action to help small businesses. We fully eliminated capital taxes for businesses as of 2010.

In 2010, Ontario reduced the small business corporate income tax rate from 5.5% to 4.5%, not to mention that our corporate income tax rate is almost 13 percentage points lower than the average combined federal and state corporate tax in the United States. Of course, as was laid out in the throne speech, small businesses will also be eligible for the 8% rebate on the provincial portion of the HST on their hydro bills.

Similarly, through our industrial conservation initiative, we encourage large energy users to lower consumption during peak periods, helping them to save money. The industrial conservation initiative would be expanded to all sectors and the participation threshold would be lower, meaning that as many as 1,000 new businesses will be eligible.

This government understands the importance of taking a wide view of potential remedies and improvements that will help businesses create jobs and grow the economy.

As the Minister of Economic Development and Growth spoke to yesterday, we've been responsive to constructive commentary from the business community and other stakeholders and that's the approach they recommended.

We understand how valuable it is to solicit and take to heart comments from stakeholders and those actually on the ground, investing in our economy and creating jobs. That's why ongoing consultation is a key part of our approach to ensuring that we're continuing to create a competitive and efficient business climate.

Earlier, I mentioned the Red Tape Challenge, and that's a key example of our commitment to consultation. An integral part of the Business Growth Initiative, the Red Tape Challenge is a crowd-sourced comments platform that is expressly designed around the concept of open and transparent consultation. It provides stakeholders across a wide array of sectors with the opportunity to provide feedback that will help us continue to modernize regulations so that they are outcome-focused and evidence-based.

This past spring, we launched the Red Tape Challenge with the automotive parts manufacturing phase. You can be on the lookout for the final report coming out in the coming months. Nearly 200 comments and messages were submitted, touching on more than 30 pieces of legislation. These comments came from employers, both small and large, and they were submitted by a wide range of stakeholders, from employees and business owners to skilled tradespeople and even apprentices.

We also launched the phase focusing on the food processing sector. I know the minister attended a very tasty event at Italpasta for that kickoff—not sure where I was that day—and, starting in December, we'll be kicking off the financial services consultation. It will be followed by consultations on the mining, chemical manufacturing and forestry sectors.

As each round of the challenge closes, we will be publishing a summary of participation. We will review all the comments and ideas submitted, and create a plan to improve regulations while, as I mentioned, ensuring we are still protecting the public interest.

These burden reduction efforts will entail working with technical experts to analyze the ideas submitted, prioritize the changes that will save businesses the most time and money, and research best practices from other jurisdictions. Individual ministries will then assemble action plans to address the items related to their respective work, and those plans will be presented to the Regulatory Modernization Committee, an advisory body with a role to challenge plans that fall short of demonstrating significant improvements. Once the Regulatory Modernization Committee has signed off, all of the ministry plans will be combined into a government-wide plan to address red tape.

As the stakeholders quotes I shared earlier indicate, the regulatory modernization ecosystem we are continuing to hone is garnering widespread support and praise from the business community. In fact, the Canadian Federation of Independent Business awarded the prov-

ince the second-highest grade in Canada as part of its annual Red Tape Awareness Week.

In addition to the Red Tape Challenge, we have created an internal committee chaired by the secretary of cabinet and the Premier's business adviser to push ministries to cut red tape and listen to the good ideas that come from our consultations. Ministries will be asked to change practices or provide a reasonable explanation why the status quo must be maintained.

We've also created a regulatory centre of excellence housed within the Ministry of Economic Development and Growth. This team will help the ministries consult and learn from international regulatory best practices to ensure new policies are not overly burdensome.

This bill, if passed, will be an important part of our ongoing efforts to make Ontario a great place to do business. Our overarching priority is to help foster an environment where people want to invest and grow their businesses. We want to help Ontario businesses scale up and grow, and we want to attract even more new investment. We want to create quality, high-paying jobs for the hard-working people of Ontario, and we want to ensure that none of those efforts ever sacrifice the health, safety and prosperity of the people who call Ontario home.

Those are the principles that underpin our burden reduction efforts. Thanks to the Minister of Economic Development and Growth for making this a priority for the ministry and for the government in introducing this bill. Thank you for your time, and I look forward to further debate.

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

Mr. Jim McDonell: It's always a great privilege to rise in this House and provide feedback to the government's bills.

I know that the polls are bad, and now they have to actually push comments across the other side—"fabulous minister." I don't hear those comments at home. I hear comments at home—people are frustrated. Anger is the feedback I'm receiving; questions about what people can do. Unfortunately, there are about 20 months left.

0930

It's interesting that in 13 years, the regulation in this province has almost doubled under this government. They have not seen the reductions, we hear. Who remembers the church suppers and the farmers' markets? At one time, this government had passed regulations that were banning these institutions that have been the cornerstone of our economies for years. That's the regulation we've seen from this government.

Thirteen new acts. Of course now we have new acts that are helping businesses come in. Actually, there are more sales offices, because nobody wants to manufacture here. It's just too expensive. I know this is a bill that's made to sound good and it sounds like there are a lot of points in this, but you've made business so expensive to operate here, it's leaving. It's just more difficult and tougher to work in Ontario.

It's interesting that you're allowing the OEB more flexibility. Well, they have a lot more time now because

after your legislation in the spring, they no longer provide advice to the government. The government found this advice embarrassing because they weren't following it so they changed the legislation so that they no longer have to provide this information or this advice.

We're looking forward to seeing the details of this.

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

Mr. Peter Tabuns: This is a fairly extensive act. One might even call it an omnibus bill. I had an opportunity to listen to the member speak about the act. I have to say he's the only person I've heard slagging regulation as much as the presidential candidate in the United States, Mr. Trump, who also thinks that regulation is bad for business and society.

There's a lot in here. I'm not in a position to critique all of it but I do note that when it comes to amendments regarding the Ontario Energy Board, there seems to be a loosening-up of the ability of the board to support ownership of generation facilities by transmitters or distributors. My analysis isn't in-depth here. Others may come with something more comprehensive and more profound. But on the face of it, it looks like this will allow Hydro One to start buying up generation facilities as a privatized distributor and transmitter able to build an electric empire here in Ontario in private hands rather than public hands, which has been critical to our development over the last century.

That's a worry, Speaker. This is a government that has already shown it is in love with privatization and would sell anything that it could. It looks like it's making things easier for private distribution companies, Hydro One, to buy generation facilities in the future, maybe setting the stage for complete privatization of the whole electricity sector here in Ontario. That's a concern. I think that as we go through this bill, getting clarity on what is actually meant here is going to be critical in terms of our assessment of whether this bill is a negative or a positive. On the face of it, this is extraordinarily concerning.

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

Hon. Jeff Leal: I heard a portion of the honourable member's speech. We're talking about burden reduction, of course. It's so relevant this week, Agriculture Week in the province of Ontario; 52,000 family farms. Along with my colleague, Minister Duguid, we announced the Red Tape Challenge just a little while ago, in terms of looking at the regulatory impact within the food processing sector in the province of Ontario. Mr. Speaker, as you well know, in the great city of Hamilton, we did some work with a company, P&H Milling, a short time ago. Of course, it's the first time there's been a substantial investment in milling in the province of Ontario for over seven decades. I know, Mr. Speaker, as a great labour leader from Hamilton, you were very excited about that investment in Hamilton Harbour as part of the renewal.

We can make things work, with burden reduction, to make sure, in many ways, as they—I think it was the government of Tony Blair in Great Britain. As you know,

Mr. Speaker, he was a great member of the Labour Party in Great Britain. He did a lot of work on smart regulations in Great Britain.

I think it's important for us here in Ontario to look around the globe and see what they're doing in terms of smart regulation, looking at ways and—the bottom line is, as my colleague the Minister of Labour would say, it's all right to embark upon that, but we want to make sure that we keep those workplaces safe in the province of Ontario. We want to make sure that environmental regulations are being followed. But there is a practical way that we can look at these kinds of things, and in the debate this morning, my friend who just spoke there, the honourable gentleman, is looking at ways that we can see this in a very practical way.

Mr. Speaker, thank you very much for giving me this two-minute opportunity.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Dufferin–Caledon.

Ms. Sylvia Jones: I'm probably not going to be quite as effusive in my praise.

Bill 27 is promoted as the Burden Reduction Act, but in fact, as was raised with the other members in the House, it covers an awful lot of different ministries. It's actually quite curious that the Minister of Economic Development and Growth has brought this forward, because it truly is an omnibus bill. It covers Attorney General changes—all kinds of different areas where I think they want us to focus on the red tape reduction. I think there's a little bit too much of, "You tell us what's wrong, businesses and manufacturers." That is, quite frankly, our responsibility. It's fine to seek input, but to suggest that our manufacturers and our small businesses have time to do the government's job, I struggle with.

I do a lot of tours in businesses in my riding. I'm sure you do, Speaker; I'm sure most of us take those opportunities to get feedback. And I can tell you, the number one issue that people raise with me when I'm touring their manufacturing facilities, when I'm speaking to small businesses, is hydro, the cost of hydro, the fact that it keeps going up and there's no way to measure or anticipate what it's going to be.

Red tape reduction in principle is a good idea, but we have to remember the large issue. The big focus has to be on how we make it more affordable for people to build jobs, build industry and create wealth in the province of Ontario. While Bill 27 has some positive things in it, I think that there's a lot more that could be happening.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Davenport, two minutes.

Mrs. Cristina Martins: I want to first start off by thanking the member from Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry, the member from Toronto–Danforth, the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs and the member from Dufferin–Caledon. I'm glad to hear—at least, I think that's what I heard here just now, especially from the member from Dufferin–Caledon—that in principle, this is a good bill, and that there is work to be done.

We know, Mr. Speaker, that there is more work to be done. That's why we are consulting with many of the businesses in Ontario. We're not asking them to do our job; that is not the intent. But we're asking them to tell us what impedes them on a day-to-day basis from growing their business, from bringing more investments into Ontario, from helping us really grow this province. They're the ones that are on the ground. They're the ones facing the challenges day in and day out, and they are the most knowledgeable to tell us all those little nuances that we, as government, do not have that expertise in. That's why the Red Tape Challenge that we launched earlier in the spring, and more recently in the agriculture sector, is actually being received very positively by those in the sector.

We also heard the fact that this bill touches on many different ministries. This is a good thing that we're doing. I came from the private sector. It really astounds me at times, how long it takes for things to happen in this place, how long it takes to get things from ministries and how they sometimes tend to work a little bit in silos. Together now, through this bill, we're hoping that ministries are working together, that they're streamlining their processes, that things get done quickly so businesses can continue to invest and businesses can continue to attract the investment that we want here in Ontario to ensure that we continue to grow Ontario up.

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

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Mr. Monte McNaughton: I'm extremely pleased to be speaking to this bill this morning and to join the discussion of red tape, which is something that I hear often about as the economic development critic. Also, as the MPP for Lambton–Kent–Middlesex, many businesses of all shapes and sizes come forward on a daily basis to my office to complain about the ever-growing red tape in the province of Ontario.

I also come to this debate with the background of running a small business and owning a small business in Ontario. Growing up in a small business family, in our small business, we often discussed how government got in the way and prevented our business from growing even faster than we did, Mr. Speaker. That's the problem with the red tape in this province: the overregulation of the business community. It prevents employers from creating jobs, from growing their business, which ultimately results in higher wages for workers in Ontario, if government gets out of the way.

I applaud the government, though, for bringing in a bill to help lessen the burden that regulation is currently placing on this province, although I think there is much, much more that can be done, that should be done, and there's a lot missing from this piece of legislation. It's interesting, Mr. Speaker—and I'll talk about this more over the next, I guess, 58 minutes. The government is introducing this bill, but there are other pieces of legislation that have been passed recently and that are set to be passed by this Liberal government that are actually

going to increase red tape in a very detrimental way for businesses in Ontario, so we're going to touch a bit on that.

I also want to put on the record that this government has been in office now for 13 years, and if you ask any small business in the province—any business, actually, small, medium and large—they know that government has grown. I think the last statistic I heard is that this government has increased the size of the public sector by 300,000 workers. At the same time, we've lost, I believe, 350,000 well-paying manufacturing jobs in the province. When you grow government to that degree, you know there are a lot more rules and regulations in place. It has killed jobs in the province, and it's continuing to prevent more jobs from being created.

Unfortunately, Mr. Speaker, I think the priority we see in this bill is reducing the burden of red tape for government rather than for individuals or businesses. I think that's important to note, that this is going to be easier for the government but not necessarily much better for individuals and businesses. I hope, as the government moves forward with its Red Tape Challenge, that we'll be seeing more measures taken to offer some substantive change for the private sector in Ontario.

Mr. Speaker, it's my understanding that this bill came from the suggestions drawn from the Business Growth Initiative, ministry requests, the Regulatory Modernization Committee and requests for clarification of existing regulations, which to me sounds like quite a bit of bureaucracy to tackle the problem of bureaucracy in Ontario. Given how comprehensive the government says it has been in looking for places to cut red tape, I would have expected much more than we see in this bill. I don't know much about the process that was undertaken, but again, Mr. Speaker, I hope to see more once the participatory process of the Red Tape Challenge has actually been completed.

There is a natural reliance in Liberalism upon bureaucracy. After 13 years of this Liberal government, there is hardly a facet of life left untouched by government intervention in Ontario. It seems that at every turn, the government is there to throw up a barrier and ask for a payment. It's almost as if this government, having been in power for 13 years, is getting desperate for new things to regulate. This addiction to generating red tape has been a huge hindrance on manufacturing in particular—on all businesses—and has contributed to the loss of more than 300,000 manufacturing jobs.

The proposals in this Burden Reduction Act are unfortunately absolutely dwarfed by what we've seen come forward in the Changing Workplaces Review interim report. As we know, this is an interim report. There will be lots of input given from the business community. I know since that report has been released, our office has received more and more calls on a weekly basis about this report and the concerns that businesses have.

The regulations and red tape, the proposed changes to the Employment Standards Act and the Labour Relations

Act, would burden small and medium-sized businesses, which is outrageous. Obviously, it's an interim report, like I said, and consultation is hopefully ongoing, but from the comments I have heard from the Minister of Labour in this House, it sounds like the drafting of legislation may already be well under way.

The minister has talked about bringing in legislation that governs employment law and that governs labour relations up-to-date so that employers and employees are all "brought into the same fold." It seems to me the fold he's referencing is a distant past because most of what is in that report seems totally out of touch with the actual workplaces of today.

If the government is going to insert itself into every facet of employer and employee relations, it's going to be detrimental for everyone involved. For example, proposed changes to scheduling, such as requiring employers to schedule workers two weeks out and face fines if this schedule changes, make no sense when survey after survey regularly shows that employees value flexibility.

One recent survey by Softchoice showed that 70% of employees would leave their job for one that offers more workday flexibility. Global Workplace Analytics reviewed thousands of studies and reports on agile work and found that 36% of employees would choose flexibility over a pay raise. They also reported that Gen Yers are particularly attracted to flexible work arrangements.

There are many economic, environmental and social benefits to agile work for employers, employees and society as a whole. But this government seems to inhabit a fantasy world where everyone is employed by large corporations in a lawless land. That's just not the case in Ontario. Employers are very responsible and very good to employees, but yet, this government just doesn't view employers and job creators in a positive light. I think that's quite despicable.

The reality is that this province has over 407,000 small businesses and over 87% of people in Ontario are employed by small or medium-sized businesses. The reality is that 85% of small businesses in this province already offer flexibility to accommodate employees having personal issues. Two thirds of Ontario small business owners identified employees as the most important element to their success, above even hard work as a factor. Mr. Speaker, as a small business owner before I got here to Queen's Park, I can tell you that is true. We value our employees and that is generally how employers view their employees.

Hon. Jeff Leal: Home Hardware.

Mr. Monte McNaughton: The Minister of Agriculture mentioned Home Hardware, a great company. There are thousands and thousands—407,000 small businesses in the province of Ontario. They are well run and treat their employees with respect. I would caution the government as they move forward with this workplace review.

What this points to is that the vast majority of employees have positive relationships with their employers. Yet the government is poised to jump in and re-define that relationship.

There was quite the article today in the National Post by Philip Cross talking about how labour law changes could gut Ontario jobs in the province. I'm going to read a bit from that article. It's quite interesting and should be on the public record. Philip Cross is a former chief economic analyst at Statistics Canada, very reputable. He says: "Under the auspices of its Changing Workplaces Review, the Ontario government is considering a sweeping overhaul of the labour laws covered by the Labour Relations Act and the Employment Standards Act.

"At a panel discussion in which I participated last week, I repeatedly heard that the changes were motivated by the desire to create an environment in which your son or daughter would want to work. However, the changes envisaged mean that for many of Ontario's sons and daughters, their environment is going to continue to be living in mom's basement as they wait for an entry into the workplace.

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"The fundamental error of the lawyers and human resource specialists who are driving this misguided process is the belief that pursuing lofty goals about social justice and equity can repeal the basic laws of economics. It can't. If the all-in costs of remunerating an employee ... exceeds what an employee produces, it is impossible for the employer to create sustainable jobs.

"Impossible, because even if a well-intentioned but naïve employer hires workers at a cost that exceeds their productivity, by definition the firm will lose money and eventually go bankrupt. This truism of business life apparently escapes the Wynne government's analysis.

"Simply wanting better outcomes for public policy does not in itself produce them—in fact, it often leads to the opposite. Already in Ontario there has been a sharp decline from about 1.4 million to 1.0 million in the number of employees paid less than \$12 an hour as the minimum wage and other legislated labour costs have mounted since 2003.

"Employers increasingly will only hire and keep their most productive workers, content to let technological advances replace or automate lower-skilled jobs." That's a very important point, Mr. Speaker, and I hope the government is listening. "This actually worsens the outcome for the very class of workers government wants to help. A similar dynamic is in play in Alberta, where the Notley government—the NDP—"is raising its minimum wage to \$15 an hour as it sacrifices a generation of young workers on the altar of union support during the election."

I'll come back to this, Mr. Speaker, but this is a very alarming article. I can tell you, it's going to be detrimental to the province of Ontario if some of these initiatives come forward. We're going to see it in Alberta.

We're at a place in time where, after losing 350,000 workers in the province, we need a government with an economic plan that's going to create jobs, not create an unstable environment for expanding. We've heard this statistic many times, but red tape costs our economy over \$14 billion each year. While with one hand the Liberal

government is trimming regulations here or there with things like this Burden Reduction Act, with their other hand they're making more red tape in Ontario.

With changes to labour laws on the scale proposed by the Changing Workplaces Review, lawyer fees and paperwork are going to be a significant draw on the resources of small businesses. I want to highlight the years 1993, 1994, and 1995, because, in that report, that window of time is referenced 42 times. It's clear to me that this Liberal government is preparing the province for the jobs of yesterday, not the jobs of tomorrow.

Even the measures we see in the Burden Reduction Act which will modernize the workplace, such as legitimizing electronic documents, are actually years overdue. One schedule in this bill proposes—and listen to this, Mr. Speaker—to implement the United Nations Convention on the Use of Electronic Communications in International Contracts, a convention that dates back to the year 2007. The United Nations is not a body known for expediency, yet it took Ontario another 10 years to come around to implementing the international standard on modern communications in trade. That's actually in this legislation—

Interjections.

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

Mr. Monte McNaughton: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I would hope that the Liberal cabinet ministers would listen because this is a serious concern for the business community in Ontario. I know it's easy to sit in the bubble at Queen's Park and think things are fine out in Ontario, but they're not. When you're talking to the men and women running our valued small businesses, medium-sized businesses and large manufacturers, they have real issues with red tape in the province.

As I said, the United Nations is not a body known for expediency, and it took this Liberal government 10 years to come around to implementing this so-called international standard on modern communications in trade.

The Business Corporations Act is only now being amended to allow a corporation to maintain records of email addresses to facilitate electronic communications between the corporation, its shareholders, debt obligation holders and holders of warrants.

CFIB has reported that more than three quarters of Canadian farmers, 76%, in fact—and I'm glad the Minister of Agriculture got up to speak for a couple of minutes on this bill—named government regulation and paper burden as a serious concern for their businesses. It's a complaint I hear regularly from farmers in my riding.

Most recently, we've seen crop management specialists disqualified by out-of-touch regulation. Approximately 80% of the accredited crop management specialists are ineligible to do required tasks because they work for seed companies. This leaves about 80 trained and licensed crop management specialists to do all the required work in the entire province.

My colleague the member for Huron-Bruce has brought forward a bill to offer some relief to farmers on

this. I hope the government will be supporting this important initiative and will continue to support my colleague's call from Huron–Bruce to help farmers carry on with their important work.

Despite all these examples of low-hanging fruit where this government could easily have acted to ease the burden for farmers, there's only one proposed change in this bill that falls under the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs. That change is to eliminate—and listen to this, Mr. Speaker: That change is to eliminate the need for the ministry to obtain an order in council to establish or amend funding programs. That's it. In the entire bill, that's the only regulation that's going to be impacted regarding the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs. There is much, much more work that could be done. With all due respect, this government has been in power for 13 years and when 76% of farmers are overburdened with paperwork, urgent action should have been taken many, many years ago.

So when it comes to red tape—

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Guess who? Yelling across the floor. I know you can't hold it back. We'll try and do a little better. Thank you.

Mr. Monte McNaughton: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

When it comes to red tape reduction in agriculture, the only action the Liberal government has actually taken with this bill is to make things easier for—guess who, Mr. Speaker?—the Liberal government. It's a slap in the face to the farmers of this province and, sadly, they probably won't find it surprising. It's what rural Ontario has come to expect from this Liberal government. While farmers struggle with high hydro, rising natural gas costs—January 1, a huge increase to natural gas bills—and excessive regulation, the Liberals will continue to take care of themselves.

Regulation is also dramatically stifling innovation. By stifling innovation, the government is holding back our economy and jobs of the future. The former MPP for Niagara West–Glanbrook, Tim Hudak, introduced the Opportunity in the Sharing Economy Act to help clear away some of the regulatory barriers to that innovative new sector of the economy. As economic development critic, I have certainly heard from entrepreneurs and innovators who are having trouble getting their business off the ground in Ontario, even when similar businesses are operating in comparable jurisdictions, because the regulations in place don't reflect the current reality. I'm sure the Liberal members of this House have similar cases as well; yet, action to tackle these 21st century challenges and opportunities had to come from an opposition member's private member's bill; a bill that unfortunately died after passing second reading because this government prorogued the Legislature last month.

Speaker, I want to see Ontario be a leader again. Our economy has changed dramatically following the loss of hundreds of thousands of well-paying manufacturing jobs. With no real economic plan from this Liberal government, soaring hydro rates and the looming spectres of

increased CPP and the cap-and-trade scheme, businesses are finding a lot of disincentives to investment. The very least the government can do is get out of the way and allow the innovation and hard work of the people of this province to fuel economic growth and the creation of new industries, companies, jobs, products and services.

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In a similar vein, I have also heard a lot about innovation being stifled by the inability to efficiently transfer science and engineering breakthroughs from the lab to the commercial marketplace. Optimizing technology transfer at our universities would help foster the growth of new companies and jobs.

There have been some efforts to streamline tech transfer with MaRS Innovation, but it's still a very bureaucratic process. As an innovator, if you want to patent your innovation from a university, it can be quite confusing where to go, because there are overlapping tech transfer offices.

As a company or investor, if you're looking to transfer technology from a university, the overlap in agencies can make the whole process very complicated and time-consuming. You want to make this as accessible as possible for businesses and investors.

In fact, in the United States, we've seen the introduction of metrics and performance goals to track government's activity in tech transfer. This is highly relevant to Ontario. We spend a lot of public dollars on research and universities. If we have a common standard for measuring progress of monies invested in terms of their commercial application and impact on job growth, we can ensure the best possible policies are actually in place.

The one thing that I think everyone has seen time and time again is a failure to track outcomes. The Auditor General certainly noted it in her report last year. Because of this lack of metrics, we're deprived of a powerful tool for optimizing our regulations and policies. Instruments for enhancing quality, accountability and transparency, integrated risk and impact assessments, outcome-based regulations, regulatory tiering and an equivalence of performance test have long been advocated by the Ontario Chamber of Commerce to address exactly this issue.

This government talks a good game about wanting to create an innovation-driven economy. In fact, we know that ministers love to be dispersed across the province and hand out those cheques to those companies. I'll put it on the record again: Often, they're handing out cheques to companies because those companies have been invited to apply. There's no transparency to that program and to various granting programs to private companies through the Ministry of Economic Development.

Speaker, we all want to see an economy flourish here in Ontario where initiative and creativity can drive growth and where education, skills and hard work bring success. But too often, entrepreneurs and creators are discouraged by the inertia of government regulation and an outmoded set of rules.

Harnessing the research and development already going on in the province to build economic opportunities

just makes sense. Streamlining the tech transfer process would be another way for this government to clear out some of the regulatory impediments to collaboration between the public and private sectors.

Another major complaint that I've been hearing from stakeholders in a wide variety of industries is the lack of harmonization in regulations between the provincial and federal levels of government. Often, businesses are subject to redundant regulations that create confusion and are a drain on the resources of these private companies. It would be a huge help to businesses if the government were to prioritize the horizontal and vertical coordination and harmonization of regulation. I think that this is a huge opportunity that the government could work on, and that's getting provincial and federal governments together to harmonize some of this regulation and get rid of the duplication.

Just two stories that highlight this issue: Over the summer, of course, we had, in my riding of Lambton-Kent-Middlesex, the Arva Flour Mill, which has been in business for around 197 years. A federal inspector was actually out visiting a farm in the area, and he noticed the Arva Flower Mill and went in. The flour mill, for over a hundred years, has been operating pulleys with leather belts in a secure room. Customers and staff didn't work around these pulleys. Of course, the inspector went in, the federal inspector, and shut down the Arva Flour Mill. The Arva Flour Mill has a perfect safety record. It's the oldest operating mill, I believe, in Canada.

I will also put on the record that I'm thankful for my counterpart, member of Parliament Bev Shipley from Lambton-Kent-Middlesex, who has been a real champion for the Arva Flour Mill and has been working with the federal government to ensure that the government recognizes that the Arva Flour Mill is a historic business operating in Canada.

But again, this business deals with provincial inspectors and federal inspectors, and I think there could be some harmonization opportunities there.

We have seen a couple of major policy points lately where the federal and provincial governments are completely out of step, which has created tremendous uncertainty for the private sector. The provincial government brought in its plan for the Ontario Retirement Pension Plan, which had businesses bracing for a huge economic impact and scrambling to incorporate this bombshell into their budgets and short- and long-term plans, only to have it set aside for a proposed enhancement to the CPP—which actually remains an enigma.

With British Columbia still refusing to get on board and serious concerns being raised—they are raising some concerns, as the public understanding of what the CPP enhancement would entail grows. It leaves businesses in a continued state of uncertainty. Will they be faced with the ORPP once more if the CPP enhancement fails? We've seen businesses leaving our province to escape the high rate of hydro. The spectre of an Ontario-only pension plan still looms and may be the straw that breaks the backs of some of our businesses.

We've seen a very similar situation play out with the proposed carbon tax, federally. The Liberal government has put forward plans for what they want to spend all the revenue from their cap-and-trade scheme on, but carbon auctions haven't proven nearly as profitable for California and Quebec as they projected. Ontario businesses are left wondering what they will be on the hook for, both for the price of carbon as well as potential additional taxation to make up for the shortfall in the Liberals' spending plans. Now we have the federal government coming in with promises to regulate carbon as well.

Speaker, how can the private sector be expected to formulate a business plan under these conditions? Uncertainty and having these proposals coming at them from both the provincial and federal levels of government make things much more difficult than they actually need to be.

Unfortunately, the problem of redundant regulations isn't limited to overlap between the federal government and the provincial government. This problem also exists between ministries across the Ontario government. To give one specific example, companies in the trucking industry are concerned that different hours of work requirements mean that they need to keep two different logs, one for the Ministry of Labour rules and one for the Ministry of Transportation rules. One company received notice from the Ministry of Labour about an infraction, but seemed to be compliant with the Ministry of Transportation. In this case, the government's inability to find internal efficiencies results not only in essentially the same work being done twice on the government's side, needlessly expending additional taxpayer-funded resources, but also in the private sector having to put resources into completing the same work twice for the same level of government.

But it doesn't stop there. Not only can Ontario ministries not seem to get on the same page, but I have also heard cases of officials within the same ministry working with different sets of standards. As always, it's the private sector, the private citizen or company who pays the price.

I'll give you a specific example, Mr. Speaker. A motor vehicle parts manufacturer had a Ministry of Labour inspector shut down production on one of their lines for more than two weeks because he said the machines were unsafe—which might be reasonable, except that a previous inspector had signed off on \$10,000 of improvements from the previous year that had been done at his insistence. When the manufacturer showed the second inspector the certification from the previous inspector, he said, "He doesn't know what he's doing." The manufacturer was then compelled to rip out the previous safety system and spend an additional \$15,000 to comply with the second inspector's standards.

This is happening all over Ontario, and again, this bill does nothing to address these real-life concerns that these manufacturers have. It's absolutely outrageous. That is \$10,000 to \$15,000 spent for absolutely nothing, not to mention the lost productivity from a manufacturing line

being shut down for two weeks. They would have been better off taking the cash and having a bonfire, quite frankly.

Sometimes reducing the burden on businesses means not only reducing regulations, but ensuring that the regulations that are in place are being properly and consistently enforced. Yet another example of a failure in this regard was brought forward by a tobacco products wholesaler. A TSSA inspector visited their plant and told them their boiler needed to be alarmed, monitored and required extensive paperwork daily because of its size. It turned out that this inspector did not know how to rate boilers properly and that their boiler was small enough that the current procedures were within the law. They spent almost \$10,000 to find out this error.

Mr. Speaker, I know I only have a few minutes left, but I also want to bring forward to the House a real-life example, again, from my riding, and it has to do with the TSSA. There is a small business that had a propane refill station, and years ago, because of the regulations regarding propane—the overregulation of that industry, quite frankly—the small business in my riding removed that refill station. Three years after removing the refill station, the TSSA sent an invoice to a small business in my riding saying, “We recently visited your small business. Here’s an invoice for \$1,000. Your propane refill station is operating perfectly. It’s perfectly safe.” That refill station wasn’t even on the property; it was removed three years before. This is exactly what’s happening. We have all kinds of complaints, and again, this bill is going to do nothing to help any of these situations that are happening in our communities.

I’ll end on this note, Mr. Speaker. I know we have about another half an hour to come back to this bill on another day. We’ve got more real-life examples. Speaker, this is what happens when government is too big. This is what happens when government hires 300,000 more public sector workers. This is what happens when we have a government that’s been in power for 13 years. This is what happens when a government becomes completely out of touch with real-life people in the province. They have no idea what’s happening in cities and towns and villages across the province. Individuals and businesses are being strangled by big government, red tape and overregulation of every facet of our life in the province of Ontario.

With that—I know the clock is nearing a quarter after 10—we will continue this debate another day.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

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

The House recessed from 1013 to 1030.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Monte McNaughton: I’m really honoured today to have with me relatives of my wife, Kate. I’d like to

introduce Caroline, Rick and Halina Przybysz. Welcome to Queen’s Park.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: I’d like to welcome some friends who are joining us here today on OFL lobby day: Krystle Sinnapan, Brandon Haynes, Julian Di Benedetto—I’m going to mess a lot of these up, Speaker—Zenee Maceda, Alexandra Pinoso, Tefere Zemene, Jana—this one’s tough—Papuckoski—someone’s going to beat me up on that one—Kingsley Kwok, Beverly Beekoy, Filomena Ferraro, Amandeep Singh Buttar and Jerry Jarosz. Thank you. I welcome them to Queen’s Park today.

Hon. Kevin Daniel Flynn: It’s with great pleasure that I introduce Chris Buckley, president of the Ontario Federation of Labour, along with other members of the OFL. The OFL is having its lobby day here. I’d also like to greet Dave Millar, who comes from Burlington.

Please welcome Chris and the members of the OFL to Queen’s Park.

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I’d like to welcome three friends from London who have joined us today as part of the OFL Lobby Day: Dani Bartlett, Eric Johnston and Stewart Wise. Welcome. I’d also like to acknowledge Patty Coates, secretary-treasurer of the OFL.

Mrs. Amrit Mangat: I would like to welcome to Queen’s Park the grade 10 students from St. Marcellinus Secondary School in the great riding of Mississauga–Brampton South. They are here to learn more about their provincial government. I hope they enjoy it.

Mr. Bill Walker: It’s a pleasure to introduce Marilyn Morris. Marilyn is a valuable volunteer in the town of Meaford and the initiator of the Meaford Scarecrow Invasion and Family Festival, which just celebrated its 20th anniversary on the weekend. We also have her daughter Regan Moore, and Keith Grein, father of page—I’ve got to think of his first name—our page Mr. Grein. I can’t get his first name out. I’ll come back.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: I think people have already mentioned that it’s lobby day for the OFL. We wanted to welcome Chris Buckley, the president of that organization; Patty Coates, secretary-treasurer; and Ahmad Gaied, executive vice-president.

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: I too would like to welcome Chris Levitt, from Northumberland–Quinte West. Welcome, Chris.

Mr. Bill Walker: I want to correct my record. It is Paul Grein.

Ms. Catherine Fife: It’s my pleasure to welcome the family of one of today’s page captains, Zoe Suderman, to Queen’s Park. Her parents, Rebecca Seiling and Derek Suderman, are here in the members’ gallery, along with all four of her grandparents: Ron and Jeanette Seiling and Jack and Irene Suderman. Welcome to Queen’s Park.

Hon. Mitzie Hunter: It is my great pleasure to welcome all the teachers who are visiting the House today and all of those who are watching, given that it’s World Teachers’ Day. Thank you for all the great work of all our teachers across Ontario.

M^{me} France Gélinas: I have a visitor all the way from Australia, who is in the west gallery with us. His name is

Davy Perry. He is with the Health Services Union of New South Wales. Welcome to Queen's Park. He is with Clarke Eaton, Phil Pollard, Sara Labelle and Steve Ward from OPSEU. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. James J. Bradley: I'd like to welcome members of the Toronto Blue Jays baseball team, who I anticipate will be here shortly in the gallery, and congratulate them on their victory over Baltimore and their entry into the first round of playoffs.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: It's my pleasure to rise on behalf of the Conservative caucus to wish the Trudeau slayer, Lorne Coe, a happy birthday.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Many happy returns of the day.

Ms. Catherine Fife: Please join me in welcoming the Canadian Nuclear Association, who are here for their lobby day today. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. Han Dong: Please join me to welcome two of my constituents, a female entrepreneur and a newcomer to Canada, Shirley Sun, and her colleague Wells Wei. Welcome.

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: I would like to welcome page captain Tegan Elliott. Her mother, Christy Cowan, is here today. She will be arriving shortly in the gallery. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Ms. Ann Hoggarth: I would like to welcome to the Legislative Assembly Jackie Manthorne from Ottawa West-Nepean; Germaine Gould and Preston Harris, both from Essex; and Antoinette Brind'Amour from Quebec—and excuse my terrible accent. They're here from the Canadian Cancer Survivor Network, and we invite you to the reception this evening in room 228.

Mr. John Yakabuski: I would like to welcome representatives of the Canadian Nuclear Association, who are here today for their nuclear day at Queen's Park.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: I'd like to welcome a couple of friends of mine who are here for the lobby day today: Jason McMichael from Sarnia, Matt Whelan and also, from the Canadian Nuclear Association, Steve Coupland.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I would like to introduce in the Speaker's gallery this morning guests of mine. Please join me in welcoming Joseph Paquette, Guy Mandeville, and Senator Alis Kennedy. These are World War II veterans from the Métis Nation of Ontario. Welcome. Boozhoo.

Also, in the Speaker's gallery today is the Consul General of Israel at Toronto, Galit Baram. Please join me in welcoming our consul general.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: And Stan. Don't forget Stan.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you—and Stan. That's on the record.

The member from Simcoe-Grey on a point of order.

Mr. Jim Wilson: Mr. Speaker, I seek unanimous consent to move a motion concerning the unaudited consolidated financial statements for the province of Ontario for the fiscal year ended March 31, 2016.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Mr. Wilson is requesting permission for a unanimous consent without notice of motion. Do we agree? I heard a no.

Therefore, I will do a last call for introductions. I know people were just gathering. Are there any other last introductions? Seeing none, it is now time for question period.

ORAL QUESTIONS

ENERGY POLICIES

Mr. Patrick Brown: My question is for the Premier. The people of Ottawa deserve a government that is going to stand up for them. As I said on Monday, Hydro Ottawa has requested a rate increase for families who conserve energy. It makes no sense that if you conserve energy, you would pay more, yet this government won't condemn that plan.

Mr. Speaker, here is another chance directly for the Premier to admit, to say here in the Legislature, that that plan is absurd. Will the Premier tell the OEB that families shouldn't be punished for conserving energy?

1040

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: As I've said to the Leader of the Opposition, those decisions, in terms of increases or not, are made by the Ontario Energy Board. I think he knows that. It is up to the Ontario Energy Board to look at the factors that are laid before it and to make that decision. As we know, sometimes the OEB grants an increase and sometimes they do not. It's up to them to make that decision.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Patrick Brown: Back to the Premier: When the Premier wants to get involved and have her PST rebate, then she can get involved in hydro. But right now, all of a sudden, she can't get involved because she thinks it's appropriate that the people of Ottawa are charged more for conserving energy. It's absurd. But then again, Mr. Speaker, this is the same Premier that has overcharged the people of Ontario by \$9.2 billion for renewable contracts. This is the same Premier, this is the same government, that has taken \$1.3 million in donations from some 30 companies for the Ontario Liberal Party, for bad policy.

My question is: Rates are going to go up on November 1, long before any band-aid solution. Will the Premier do the right thing? Does her government refuse to condemn this possible rate increase? Do the right thing. Help families suffering with your disastrous hydro policy.

Interjections.

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

A gentle reminder for everyone: please, to the Chair. No personal conversations. Everything is put to the Chair, both answer and question.

Premier?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I had the opportunity this morning to meet with the governor of Arizona. We had a number of very fruitful conversations about issues that we are both dealing with in our jurisdictions. But one of

them we had was about energy. We talked about the fact that in Ontario we have shut down the coal-fired plants and we have invested in our electricity grid. The folks in Arizona are looking at jurisdictions like ours as they make decisions about climate change.

We have taken steps in this province. We have a 90% emissions-free grid. We've invested in what was an unreliable and a dirty electricity grid—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Keep it down, please.

Finish.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: No smog days this year—that's because of decisions that we have made on the electricity grid in Ontario.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Just before you rise, right after I asked for—and I hear something else and it's just a signal that you're not going to listen. So if that's going to happen, I'm going to move to warnings. You now have your first warning about warnings.

Mr. Patrick Brown: Again to the Premier: The Premier can speak to any governor she likes. She can speak to any Premier she likes. They're all happy with Ontario's energy policy because we're sending jobs to every other state and jobs to every other province because our energy policy is a disaster. We are giving away electricity under this Premier's hydro plan, and she does not appreciate how it's hurting families.

Just last week in committee we heard stories about how this is hurting Ontario. Norma Schmidt told the legislative committee that this Liberal plan is “a slap in the face” to Ontario. Marguerite Thomas from Brussels said that when it comes to hydro, “There is no joy in rural and northern households.” Terrance Green, who lives in Ottawa South, called the rebate simply “window dressing.”

Mr. Speaker, we've heard it at committee. We've heard it around the province. Why won't the Premier act? Why won't the Premier help? Is it because she took \$1.3 million in donations? Is that the only reason she refuses to actually fix the hydro problem?

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

The previous way in which the leader was making reference to that issue was okay. Now he's getting close to impugning motive and assigning blame. I'm going to remind him that if it happens again I'm going to ask him to withdraw.

Premier.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Energy.

Hon. Glenn Thibeault: I'm very pleased to rise—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I'm looking for people to understand that this is an opportunity for me to hear clearly. I don't want the interjections to stop me from hearing and making announcements in the House.

Carry on.

Hon. Glenn Thibeault: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Once again, I'm pleased to rise to address the questions by the Leader of the Opposition.

As we've said, we've invested in a modernized electricity system. We took a dirty system and made it clean by completely eliminating dirty coal-fired generation, meaning Ontario has a cleaner future. We don't have to send out warnings anymore, telling people not to go outside and breathe, something that that government, when they were in power, had to do almost on a daily basis.

You know what, Mr. Speaker? Families in Ontario will now have the Ontario—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): That's not being helpful, either. Next time, we're moving to warnings.

Finish, please.

Hon. Glenn Thibeault: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. That act is instant and permanent: come January 1, an 8% reduction to all families right across the province. That's the one thing that's benefiting families.

SPECIAL-NEEDS STUDENTS

Mr. Patrick Brown: My question is for the Premier. This is a government that has lost its way. This is a government with misplaced priorities. The Liberals have no problem paying \$4 million to the CEO of Hydro One while the Quebec counterpart in that same position gets \$400,000. The Liberals have no problem spending nearly \$7 million for high-priced consultants just to tell them how to sell Hydro One. But when it comes to helping people in need, when it comes to helping Yes I Can nursery, which helps children with autism, the government's voice is lost. Soon 130 children with autism—their child care spaces will be gone because of this government. Does the Premier value a \$4-million CEO more than 130 children with autism in her riding?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: As I have said to the Leader of the Opposition, I have worked very closely with Yes I Can Nursery School over the years. I think it is a terrific program. It's a mixed program. Not all of the kids at Yes I Can are on the autism spectrum, but a number are. There is \$300,000 of provincial money that flows to the municipality of Toronto and that goes to Yes I Can. That support stays in place.

We've been very clear that if the leadership at Yes I Can will sit down with the city of Toronto, provincial officials will find a way to work with them so that there's a budget and a sustainability plan over the next few years.

We've been very clear about that. As I said, in the interim, that \$300,000 a year continues to flow to Yes I Can.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Patrick Brown: It really is incredible hearing the Liberal talking points. They're saying that Yes I Can still gets funding. Yes I Can has said they have no funding. The city councillor says there's no funding. The government, in their own correspondence, asked Yes I Can

nursery for a wind-down plan, and yet they're here today saying, "Nothing has changed." But 130 children are going to lose their child care spaces, and we have a Premier who's oblivious to it. You asked the nursery for a wind-down plan. They're going to close. They're going to close their doors in your riding. It is wrong. Those children need help.

My question to the Premier is: Nine years ago, she stood up for this nursery. Nine years ago—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock. We're moving to warnings.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Right after I say it, the member decides he just wants to do it. Watch it. We're moving to warnings.

Finish your question, please.

Mr. Patrick Brown: Nine years ago, the Premier promised these families and promised these children that the provincial government would be by their side. My question is: Today, the nursery is about to close because of this government's decision, because of this government trying to pull the funding. Will the Premier stand up today in the Legislature and say that she will not allow the nursery to close?

Interjections.

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

Premier?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: For 25 years, I've been advocating for a strong, publicly funded education system. Nine years ago, the Leader of the Opposition was a member of a government that had no interest in a child care policy across this country.

The reality is, I believe in the program at Yes I Can. I believe it's a strong program. I believe we should continue to fund that \$300,000 that flows to the city of Toronto.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Leeds–Grenville is warned. The Minister of Transportation is warned.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): And there are others. If I saw who just did that, they would be warned too.

Please.

1050

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Those are provincial dollars that flow to the city of Toronto and go to the nursery school.

There needs to be a process whereby Yes I Can sits down with Toronto city officials and with provincial officials to come up with a budgeting process that will make the nursery school sustainable. That's what I have said all along. Nine years ago and—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I'll do it. The member from Dufferin–Caledon is warned.

You have one sentence.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I'm fine, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplement-ary.

Mr. Patrick Brown: The Premier says there is some flow-through funding. The executive director of the nursery says that there is no flow-through funding. Liberal senator Jim Munson says this is absolutely a callous decision of the government. Liberals are saying that to this Liberal government. And then you've got the Toronto city councillor saying the Premier is unequivocally wrong that there is a municipal mechanism for funding.

The government has asked for a wind-down plan from Yes I Can nursery. This is the same government that took families with children with autism to court. This is the same government that was going to kick kids off of wait-lists for IBI therapy.

They recognized in the spring that their cuts to autism were wrong. I'm asking them today, on behalf of the children with autism in Don Valley West, will they do the right thing—just like they did in the spring—acknowledge that they are wrong, and make sure that these children are not abandoned? Do the right thing, please.

Interjections.

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

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Yes, you know what's coming. The member from Huron–Bruce is warned.

Premier.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Associate Minister of Education (Early Years and Child Care).

Hon. Indira Naidoo-Harris: Mr. Speaker, I want to start out by saying that I find it a little bit rich that the member opposite is actually talking about child care and child care plans, because the member opposite and the party opposite have no plan when it comes to child care.

We not only have a plan; we have been supporting child care in this province to the tune of \$1 billion annually. Of that money, \$351.7 million is going to the city of Toronto to support child care. So I really think that the member opposite needs to look at the figures and understand what is happening when we talk about money flowing.

The city of Toronto flows \$300,000 to the Yes I Can child care centre, and they have that funding there. What the member opposite has been talking about is limited funding that was there for a sustainability plan with limits and that was in a timely fashion—

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

Interjections.

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

New question.

PRIVATIZATION OF PUBLIC ASSETS

Ms. Andrea Horwath: For 100 years, reliable, affordable public electricity powered an economy that led

people from across the world to come to Ontario to build a life. It's one of the reasons my dad came here from Slovakia. But the cost of electricity today has businesses moving away, life getting harder and people losing hope.

People are being forced to choose between necessities because their bills are so high. I believe in Ontario, and so do the people I talk with every day. But they need to see change, and they need to see it now.

Will this Premier listen to what people need and stop the privatization of Hydro One?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: The leader of the third party talks about the history of this province. Quite frankly, Mr. Speaker, if Conservative and NDP governments had made the investments that were necessary in our electricity and in our infrastructure, we wouldn't have been in the mess that we were in by 2003.

The reality is, we had to invest in a neglected electricity system. It needed to be cleaner and it needed to be upgraded. We did that. We recognize that there's a cost associated with that, but we also recognize that had we not made the decisions that we made, had we not shut down the coal-fired plants, had we not invested in renewable energy, we would not have the clean air that we have now. We would not have avoided \$4 billion in health care and associated costs.

And the decision around Hydro One: Had we not made that decision, we would not be able to invest in the infrastructure that, again, has been neglected by previous governments.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Well, Speaker, had we not had consecutive Liberal and Conservative governments privatizing our electricity systems, we wouldn't have the kind of rates that we have in the province of Ontario today.

Let me tell you about Ernest Warner. He lives in my riding. He and his wife are retired, and they are on a fixed income. Ernie has gotten in touch with my office because his wife is on dialysis and they've seen their hydro bill increase by 20% in just the last couple of months. Ernie wrote, "My last bill was for \$540 plus an added \$220 in the so-called delivery and regulatory charges." They don't qualify for any help, Speaker. They don't qualify, but they still need to run that dialysis machine, whether it's peak hours or not. She needs that dialysis. The Warners cannot afford privatization.

Will this Premier stop any further privatization of Hydro One?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Let me just address the issue of this family who are in distress. I hope that there has been a full exploration by them, with the help of the leader of the third party, to look at what actually they might qualify—

Interjections.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: —because there are a number of programs. I don't know the details of the situation, but in terms of the Ontario Electricity Support Program and the property tax and electricity credit, they certainly will qualify for the 8% reduction on their bill.

Mr. Speaker, I recognize, in a situation like that, that is a family that does need support, and as I've said, I hope

there would be a full exploration with them of what the options might be.

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: This Premier is not listening, once again. They don't qualify for any of the programs. They still have to put the dialysis machine on. They can't afford to do that.

Students can't afford to pay for hydro and pay off their student loans. Families can't afford to pay for hydro and pay for child care in this province at the same time. But instead of stopping the sell-off of Hydro One, the Premier is now greasing the wheels for the privatization of local hydro—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I'm sorry, but there's dialogue going between both, so I'm just going to ask for everyone to rest, please.

Leader?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The Premier is now greasing the wheels for the sell-off of local hydro utilities. People cannot afford privatized for-profit hydro in the province of Ontario. Will the Premier stop all of these sell-offs now?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Energy.

Hon. Glenn Thibeault: There are many programs that are out in the province right now to help families who are having a difficult time with some of the costs of electricity, and we recognize that, Mr. Speaker. That's why we acted with our three-point plan to help them, come January 1 when we get the legislation passed, to ensure that there's the 8% reduction, to ensure that there's a 20% reduction for families in northern, remote and rural communities.

It's also very important to note that the OESP is there to help families that need to use medical equipment. It goes up to \$75 a month, so I encourage every MPP and every family that needs this type of assistance to follow up with their local utility, because they can make sure that there are systems in place to help these families. The utilities and the government are working together to continue to help families.

And when it comes to Toronto Hydro, Mr. Speaker, that's a decision for council. We've been saying that over and over again.

MINIMUM WAGE

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My next question is also for the Premier. Many Ontarians are finding it harder than ever before to pay for things like decent child care, paying off student loans and paying their hydro bills. Many are finding it much, much harder to secure a future for themselves and their children. While bills go up, however, wages are staying flat. One in three people in Ontario earns a low or minimum wage.

Will this Premier take action and agree today that instead of raising the minimum wage by 15 cents, she raises it to \$15 an hour?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Mr. Speaker, I know that the Minister of Labour will want to speak to the process we've put in place that raises the minimum wage in a way that looks at the cost of living and removes it from a political decision-making process that meant, for over a decade, there was no increase in the minimum wage.

But the leader of the third party talked about some of the things that challenge people. Those issues, like the cost of tuition, are exactly why we have put in place free tuition, as of September 2017, for 150,000 students in Ontario.

1100

The announcement we made the other day about hospital parking: I had someone come up to me last night and thank me for that decision.

We understand that there are challenges that people are facing. The changes that we are making, including one that the leader of the third party advocated for, which is taking the provincial portion of the HST off electricity prices: We're doing those things for exactly the reasons that the leader of the third party outlined.

Interjection.

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

Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Well, the process that this Premier is so proud of will have the minimum wage go to \$15 an hour at some time 20 years from now. Twenty years from now or more, this province will have a \$15 minimum wage under the Liberal plan. It's not good enough.

There are things that we need to do now to make sure people can have a decent job and a decent living. We've called for some of those things, of course. The \$15 minimum wage is one of them. We want to make it easier for folks to join a union, which is the best ticket into the middle class in this province, and make sure that they can get a first contract when they do so. There's no reason in this province why temp workers should not be paid the same rate and get the same benefits as the people that they're working right beside in the same workplace.

The list goes on and on and on. When will this government start taking action to improve the quality of work in this province, like, for example, increasing the minimum wage to \$15 an hour?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Labour.

Hon. Kevin Daniel Flynn: It's a pleasure to rise in the House and address the questions from the member opposite. I think when you look at the province of Ontario, what you have in place is a model that other provinces are starting to emulate. They're looking at the predictability. They're looking at the stability.

What we did before we put these rules in place that allow the minimum wage to increase year after year—we went out to the community. We talked to business. We talked to labour. We talked to poverty advocates. We talked to everybody who had an interest in this.

The people who appeared not to have an interest and didn't make one submission to the panel were the New

Democratic Party. If there was one party that I would have thought stepped up when the time was right to give their opinion on how to have predictability and stability in the minimum wage process, it would have been those people who are asking the question. They can do better than that. Ontario is doing better today.

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: They're doing a lot of looking and a lot of talking but they sure aren't acting to make change in this province to bring people who are working out of poverty. It is shameful that people working full-time in this province do not earn enough money to put food on the table and a roof over their head.

The Premier likes to talk about her 15-cent increase to minimum wage, but people in Ontario are at a breaking point and they know that 15 cents simply is not enough. People need good jobs and they want to know that the next generation is going to have the kind of jobs that you can actually build a good life on right here in this province.

They need a \$15 minimum wage. They should be able to join a union. They should be paid fairly for the work that they do. People want to know there's a future for them and for their kids here in this province. Will this Premier take the first step today and make the commitment to bring Ontario's minimum wage to \$15 an hour?

Hon. Kevin Daniel Flynn: Thank you once again to the member for this question. The Changing Workplaces Review that we put in place with two expert advisers is addressing a lot of the issues that are being raised in the House today. The OFL has been a partner in that. They're stepping to the plate. They're bringing forward good ideas. They're bringing forward recommendations as to how we can make this province a competitive province globally with good jobs, with decency in the workplace.

I would remind the member that between 1996 and 2003, people who earned the minimum wage in this province received not one single increase—zero, frozen at \$6.85. Since we've been in power since 2003, we've increased the minimum wage 10 times. Up until very recently, we were the leading province in Confederation. We've put predictability into the system and stability into the system, and it's working. It's about time the New Democrats got on board.

FISCAL ACCOUNTABILITY

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: My question is to the President of the Treasury Board. I think the headline of the Toronto Sun's editorial summed it up best. Auditor General Bonnie Lysyk—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock. Order, please. At the right moment, you won't know when I'm going to offer you a free warning.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: So let's go back to this: "Lysyk More Credible Than the Liberals." They asked them-

selves, “Who to believe?” and quickly came to the same conclusion everyone else in Ontario did. They said they “believe Lysyk, an independent, non-partisan officer who works for the Legislature, not the ruling Liberal Party”—

Interjection.

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

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: The Auditor General is “a chartered accountant and certified internal auditor, with a master’s degree in business administration.” What does the government have? Well, \$305 billion and growing in debt.

Mr. Speaker, I know who we believe on this side of the House. But I ask you, why would or should anyone in the province of Ontario believe in this Liberal government’s numbers?

Hon. Liz Sandals: Let’s just try this one more time. We use the Auditor General’s numbers. The numbers we presented in the unaudited financial accounts show a \$5-billion deficit. That is the number proposed by the auditor. We showed her accumulated debt number, the number proposed by the auditor. So if you believe the auditor, you believe us.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: I thought I was at the Ontario Legislature, not at Second City right now.

Despite their best efforts to bully the people of Ontario through the Auditor General, the Minister of Infrastructure, during his time at energy, decided he would attempt to bully the Auditor General as well. Now the President of the Treasury Board and the Minister of Finance are trying to bully her and trying to get her to change her numbers, and it won’t work. They actually still owe her disclosure forms. They know that but they’re not forthcoming.

As the minister said, “Given the discrepancy of opinion, we do need to get some independent third-party advice to help us sort this out.”

So here’s the reality: We already have an independent third-party auditor. Her name is Bonnie Lysyk, and we support her on this side of the House.

I ask the President of the Treasury Board, will she cancel the third-party external audit immediately? Will she stop wasting taxpayer dollars and will she accept the auditor’s numbers immediately?

Hon. Liz Sandals: Let’s replay this one more time. We have an opinion from the public servants of Ontario, whom we hold in the greatest regard. The opinion of the public servants gives us one set of numbers, which are the set of numbers that have been used and approved by auditors and the public service for 14 years, which have been approved for the last 14 years by four auditors, including for two years by the current auditor. On the other hand, we have a new opinion from the Auditor General on a different accounting treatment from the one that has been used for the last 14 years.

Cabinet had to figure out what to put in the account. We had two conflicting pieces of advice and we chose,

by regulation, the auditor’s number. So I repeat, we chose—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I’m standing. New question?

FISCAL ACCOUNTABILITY

Ms. Catherine Fife: My question is to the Premier. For the first time in history, a provincial government is trying to go around the Auditor General by releasing an unaudited version of the public accounts. And if that wasn’t unusual enough, there are whole sections missing. There are no statements from the Ontario Electricity Financial Corp., and so we have no idea what happened to the Hydro One proceeds that were supposed to pay down the hydro debt, or what happened to the \$2.6-billion departure tax that the government paid to the OEFC on Hydro One’s behalf.

1110

The OEFC exists entirely within the treasury. They work just down the hall from the same people who prepared these unaudited public accounts. So I ask, where are the OEFC financial statements?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: President of the Treasury Board.

Hon. Liz Sandals: What I would like to assure the member is that when we tabled the public accounts—as I explained yesterday, once we have the advice of the auditor in terms of her audit opinion and have gone through the various legal approval steps that have to follow along with that, we will be formally tabling the public accounts.

I wish to assure the members that if there has been one or two of the agencies that have inadvertently been omitted, they will certainly be in the public accounts.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

Ms. Catherine Fife: That does not instill a lot of confidence in the public accounts, and it’s not acceptable to the people of this province.

The OEFC statements weren’t the only thing missing. They were not the only report that was missing: so were the statements from the former Hydro One Brampton, and so were the statements from the WSIB.

The CEO of the WSIB is Tom Teahen, the former chief of staff for the Premier. My question is to the Premier: Why couldn’t she persuade her former chief of staff to submit the WSIB’s financial statements on time?

Hon. Liz Sandals: All of the information is available, and it will be available when we table the public accounts. As we have explained before, the public accounts require the opinion of the auditor. When we have the opinion of the auditor, we will go forward with the formal process that completes the finalizing of the public accounts. That will involve going to cabinet, going to the Lieutenant Governor and, obviously, having the formal printing. When all that has been accomplished, we will table the public accounts.

At the moment, I’m awaiting the audit opinion from the auditor. But the public accounts will obviously include all of the required information.

EMPLOYMENT STANDARDS

Ms. Ann Hoggarth: My question is for the Minister of Labour. We continue to hear more and more about precarious work and the nature of changing jobs in our province. In today's workplace, people are no longer keeping traditional nine-to-five business days or taking weekends off. It is common for Ontarians to be self-employed or have part-time and temporary employment.

As a government, we need to ensure that we do all that we can to provide support for these changing workplaces. People in my riding of Barrie are asking for change. Businesses and workers want our laws to reflect the realities of modern economy, and we must ensure that we do just that.

When the minister announced this government's Changing Workplaces consultations, I was happy to hear that this is something we are taking seriously. Can the minister please provide this House with an update on these consultations?

Hon. Kevin Daniel Flynn: Thank you to the member for that excellent question. I'm really happy to stand in the House to provide the House with an update on our Changing Workplaces consultations. I'm especially happy to be here to thank Chris Buckley and the OFL for the attitude and the approach that they have brought to this consultation. They've been a very strong partner throughout the whole process. They've attended consultations. They've given us a report with 24 recommendations attached. They continue to engage with us. They bring forward constructive ideas on how to make Ontario the best province to do business in, and to work in, as well, at a decent wage.

We've also heard from businesses, from hundreds of other individuals and from groups from all areas of the province. After speaking with all of these different groups, the advisers have put together an interim report. They've outlined the ideas that were shared with them. The consultations close October 14. I would urge all members to make sure that they have their views in.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

Ms. Ann Hoggarth: Thank you to the minister for his answer. I'm happy to hear that so many people are engaged with the special advisers on the Changing Workplaces Review.

As the minister has said before, the Changing Workplaces Review is the first comprehensive review of Ontario's Labour Relations Act, 1995, and Employment Standards Act, 2000. This is an exceptional opportunity that we have to make sure that we provide protection for workers and that we help businesses prosper in our province. I know that the people of Barrie work hard each and every day and are looking forward to seeing how the Changing Workplaces Review will make their everyday lives that much better.

Can the minister please tell us more about the interim report and what the next steps are in updating the Labour Relations Act and the Employment Standards Act?

Hon. Kevin Daniel Flynn: I'd like to thank the member for the question again and also thank her for her

own personal involvement in the important review. The special advisers have heard more than 200 presentations and received about 300 submissions to date from stakeholders and other groups. After reading the submissions and speaking to all of the different groups, the advisers put together an interim report outlining all the ideas that have been shared with them.

It's important to remember that these ideas are not final recommendations; they're some of the options that people brought forward to the special advisers. They're considering these options, they're combining them with ongoing information and they're bringing in the years of knowledge and the expertise that they bring to the task. The recommendations are going to help us protect workers and support business in the province of Ontario. Ontario needs to remain a place where workers feel safe and secure and business is competitive.

ONTARIO LOTTERY AND GAMING CORP.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: My question is for the Minister of Finance. Through a freedom-of-information request, we learned that yet another government initiative has ended in failure. After more than two years, the government abandoned their plans to modernize OLG, but not before sticking the Ontario taxpayers with another hefty bill. OLG's annual report indicates that the government spent \$190 million towards modernization in 2012-13, \$69 million in 2013-14 and a further \$49 million in 2014-15. When asked where the money was spent, the government said, "Access to the records is denied"—some \$308 million spent with no paper trail and absolutely nothing to show for it in return. So I ask the minister, will you release the detailed account of where that money went?

Interjections.

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

Hon. Charles Sousa: As the member opposite has just noted, there are a tremendous amount of contributions that the OLG makes to the province, a dividend that's used to supply and support schools, hospitals and communities to the tune of \$2 billion last year alone. As we proceed forward, the release of those reports is being made, and all of it is open and transparent. We recognize that we need to continue to modernize and provide further savings.

What the member opposite doesn't talk about is the degree of investment necessary right now to bring some of those establishments into the modern era. We're continuously looking at that, as we did with the lottery. We recognize the importance that it has for Sault Ste. Marie and its employees. We want to ensure that the communities that are providing some of these services have the investments necessary to, again, provide better service as well as appropriate social programs to protect consumers in those areas.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Back to the minister: The failed ORPP scheme cost Ontario taxpayers \$70 million and

delivered zero dollars in benefits. But through our information requests, we learned that the government spent \$308 million on another abandoned initiative. It's funny that the minister mentioned hospitals, because, to help pay for this blunder, the government cut \$107 million from OLG's transfer to hospitals. They're cutting front-line health care services that Ontario families and seniors rely on most. They're attempting to balance their budget on the backs of our most vulnerable. Another \$308 million has been spent, with zero accountability, and our hospitals are now paying for the Liberals' waste, mismanagement and scandal.

I ask the minister, what else are you hiding?

Interjections.

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

Hon. Charles Sousa: As we noted, we're modernizing the OLG, recognizing that more can be available to help Ontario communities. In fact, lottery sales last year were a record \$3.8 billion. Since 1975, OLG has provided \$42 billion to the province and to the people of Ontario. All of these payments go to support hospitals, schools, as well as prevention for gambling and other matters, Mr. Speaker. We have continuously noted that we need to do more in order to provide for some of those services to those communities.

1120

When the member opposite talks about disclosure, we have been doing just that. In fact, we did it recently, ensuring that we have information available to the public, notwithstanding the time delays that may occur. That is all the more reason why we provided the year-end financial statements to the public and to this House. We'll continue to do so, Mr. Speaker.

The Auditor General, even today, was asked if the numbers were correct, and she states: "I think they got it right on the bottom line." She, too, has noted that the numbers that we presented were her numbers, Mr. Speaker.

POVERTY

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: My question is to the Premier. A new report shows that London has deep, entrenched poverty, a situation the report authors call "brutal": 35,000 Londoners live in extreme poverty, and almost 8% are jobless. For individuals, that equates to an income of \$11,000 and, for a lone parent, \$19,000 per year.

The city of London has taken a stand against poverty by calling for an end to poverty in one generation and by establishing a living wage. When will the Premier agree to a \$15 minimum wage to help raise those 35,000 people out of extreme poverty?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister responsible for poverty reduction.

Hon. Chris Ballard: I'd just like to take a couple of minutes. It is deeply troubling to hear about those struggling in poverty, those sliding into poverty, and those

that, through our Poverty Reduction Strategy—we're on our second Poverty Reduction Strategy; there's an awful lot of good news coming out of that. The—

Interjections.

Hon. Chris Ballard: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I just wanted to remind the members that the 2016 budget advances our Poverty Reduction Strategy, with commitments to provide people with the tools and the supports they need to meet their potential. I can refer back to the poverty reduction report of last year that speaks to 47,000 children across this province raised out of poverty.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: Back to the Premier: When people get a fair paycheque, it means they can plan a future for their families. My city has been a centre of commerce and was once a hub for good-paying manufacturing jobs in southwestern Ontario. Londoners are skilled and hard-working people, but as you have heard, there are too many who are vulnerable. People need hope for the future. Does the Premier support a \$15 minimum wage?

Hon. Chris Ballard: Minister—

Interjections.

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

Hon. Brad Duguid: Mr. Speaker, this job is bent on ensuring that we continue to create jobs across this province. But southwestern Ontario is very much on the upswing when it comes to job creation and London is a very big part of that. With our Southwestern Ontario Development Fund, we've invested \$43 million. There's \$573 million of private sector investment we've brought forward. That's 2,100 jobs created in that region alone from those investments. So we care very much about that part of the province.

We're working very hard to continue to grow the economy, because the key to helping those folks who are out of work is to find them employment. That's why we're leading the country in growth, because we continue to work with our business community to ensure that we continue to grow those jobs, and with our local communities to help them grow those jobs. London is a shining example of that.

ONTARIO MUNICIPAL BOARD

Mr. Granville Anderson: My question is for the Minister of Municipal Affairs. Ontarians deserve well-planned, sustainable, vibrant communities, such as we have in the riding of Durham. That's why our government has been reviewing its land use plans and the province's land use planning system, to ensure that the system is evolving to best meet the needs of Ontarians. For example, changes in Bill 73, the Smart Growth for Our Communities Act, passed last year, gave greater deference to municipal decisions at the Ontario Municipal Board.

I understand that we are building on these efforts. The Ministry of Municipal Affairs and the Ministry of the

Attorney General are conducting a comprehensive review of the Ontario Municipal Board. This morning they made an announcement about the next stage of the review. Would the minister please outline the details of the announcement he made this morning with the Attorney General?

Hon. Bill Mauro: I want to thank the member from Durham for the question.

As he mentioned, this morning the Attorney General and I made a joint announcement downstairs in the media studio about the next phase of what Ontario will be doing when it comes to reviewing the Ontario Municipal Board. We're moving forward today, officially, with the launch of a public position paper that will be out for consultation on proposed changes and amendments to the OMB.

I do want to state, though, for people, that while we made an announcement today on the next phase of what we've been doing, this is not the beginning of our work on the OMB. There have been significant other pieces of legislation and policy work that have been out for consultation. Those legislative pieces and policy pieces, during their consultation phase—also coming into that work—were informing us on what we would be doing on the OMB. That work has found its way into this particular consultation paper, and we look forward to bringing that to the people of the province over the next 75 days.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

Mr. Granville Anderson: Thanks to the Minister of Municipal Affairs for the answer.

I know that many of my constituents will want to participate in this consultation, especially my constituents at Wilmot Creek and Canterbury Common.

The minister mentioned that there will be a number of town halls across the province. These will provide opportunities for people to understand more about the changes we are considering and to provide feedback of their own. I am glad to see that our government is taking steps to improve the OMB so that it works better for all Ontarians.

While the minister and Attorney General are working to improve the OMB, some have suggested getting rid of the OMB altogether. How would the minister respond to some of those calls to abolish the OMB?

Hon. Bill Mauro: Again, I thank the member for his question. He's right: It is not our intention to eliminate the OMB. We believe that this independent appeal mechanism needs to remain a part of the land-use planning policy framework in the province of Ontario. Those who will have suggested that perhaps it should be eliminated have not suggested what might replace it or what those people who want to appeal a local decision might do. We think it goes very much to the core of affordability and accessibility.

We are, however, referencing and trying, we think, through our proposed amendments to provide potential deference for local decision-making. My half of the review will deal with a scoping exercise. That will mean that we are going to consult on potential changes to the

OMB where we may not allow specific pieces to be appealed that currently can be appealed to the OMB. Through that mechanism, we're hoping to allow more deference for more local decision-making. As I said, we look forward, over the course of 12 town halls in the next 75 days, to bringing this to the people of the province.

ROAD SAFETY

Mr. Michael Harris: My question is for the Minister of Transportation. Two weeks ago, the minister's refusal to address the long-simmering dispute of dump truck load restrictions spilled out along GTA highways over three days of a costly protest. For three days, the minister remained silent as highways jammed and aggregate pits were picketed, with motorists and truckers paying the price in time and long-delayed transport delivery. That's because, after years of failing to address axle weight restrictions that had long been under a moratorium, instead of developing a solution with dump truck operators and contractors, this minister simply pulled the rug out and began issuing tickets.

Now that the protest has forced an about-face, will the minister explain, after his government's decade-plus of failure on load restrictions, why we should believe that the talks he has now proposed are anything more than spinning the wheels?

Hon. Steven Del Duca: I guess I would begin by saying that I suppose this question is better late than never, given that this issue was resolved a number of days ago. I had the opportunity, as did officials at the Ministry of Transportation, as did a number of members of the government caucus—we had opportunities to speak with the industry and to speak with those who were directly affected. It was important at all times, from my perspective, to make sure that the system continued to move—literally, Speaker—to make sure that jobs weren't put at risk and also to make sure that we could continue to build out, as we are doing here in the province of Ontario in the infrastructure realm.

1130

I will say that I have said to industry—and I look forward to the opportunity for us to sit down together and to continue to have a discussion to make sure that we can land in a spot that's appropriate so that this vitally important industry—and I'm talking about the entire infrastructure spectrum here—can continue to do its work, can continue to create jobs and can continue to work closely with us in building Ontario up.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Michael Harris: Going back to the moratorium really isn't a solution or a fix whatsoever. In fact, this government has had over a decade to fix it. He as minister himself has had two years, and instead of brokering a solution, the best he came up with was to begin enforcement of a regulation he knew would put operators in violation. Then, when the impact of his decision played out in long, costly traffic delays stretching down the 401, he remained mute before finally taking

us back to where we started: no solution, no timelines for a decision, no end in sight.

Will the minister continue to kick the can down the road or will he commit to ensuring that promised talks with stakeholders lead to a permanent solution on this important load restriction?

Hon. Steven Del Duca: Again, I thank the member opposite for the follow-up question. I don't think anybody who knows me in this chamber or elsewhere would ever accuse me of being mute, but I do appreciate the question. I will say that I feel that on this matter, there's a twofold responsibility for the Ministry of Transportation. The first thing for me to consider at all times, of course, is to make sure that we maintain road and highway safety and to make sure that our roads and highways right around the province that this government is investing in remain in good working order, so that's number one.

At the same time, we want to make sure that everybody in the infrastructure spectrum that is so crucial to Ontario's economy can continue to function responsibly, safely and productively. That's the work that the Ministry of Transportation is currently involved in with this industry, and we'll continue to work hard on it until we get it right.

HYDRO RATES

M^{me} France Gélinas: Ma question est pour le ministre de l'Énergie. For weeks now, people from northern and rural Ontario have been told by this minister that they are going to get a 20% reduction on their hydro bill. The minister stood in this House on September 27. He said, and I quote from Hansard, "A 20% reduction for families in rural, remote and northern communities, like in my part of the province, will actually be a significant savings for many families." The minister lives in the riding of Sudbury and not one of his constituents will qualify for the 20% savings.

Will the minister correct his record and tell the people in his riding that they are not and will not be eligible for the 20% in savings?

Hon. Glenn Thibeault: I'm very happy to rise and answer this question because, as we do live in the city of Greater Sudbury, many of the people that live in her riding will qualify for that 20% reduction, like the 330,000 families right across the province. So I'm very happy to rise up and talk about the great work that we're doing when it comes to making sure that we're putting an 8% reduction for those families right across the province—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): It doesn't matter where he's sitting, the member from Lambton-Kent-Middlesex is warned.

Carry on.

Hon. Glenn Thibeault: The purpose of the 20% reduction is to make sure that those who do live in rural, remote or northern communities get that benefit—

Interjection: R2.

Hon. Glenn Thibeault: —that are under R2—to make sure that they can actually have some savings on the delivery cost, which is high. Northerners are very happy to have this benefit and I wish that the NDP would be, too.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

M^{me} France Gélinas: Well, the people of Sudbury are not the only ones. The great majority of the 1.8 million people who live in remote, rural and northern Ontario do not qualify for the 20% in savings off their hydro bill. I get phone calls daily from people from Nickel Belt and Sudbury who are struggling with their hydro bill, and they want to know if they will be eligible for the 20% savings or not.

You see, Speaker, we have the member from Sudbury, the Minister of Energy, telling them that northerners will get a 20% savings on their hydro bill, but then they call Hydro One, and Hydro One tells them that they do not qualify for the savings.

It would be helpful if the minister could correct his record and tell the people of his riding that they do not qualify, and frankly, Speaker, neither do most of the people in Nickel Belt. We don't qualify either for the savings. Will the minister correct his record?

Hon. Glenn Thibeault: I think what the NDP need to do is understand the electricity system, because they don't have a plan. They don't have any clue as to how this process is working: 20% is going to 330,000 families—

Interjections.

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

Hon. Glenn Thibeault: The 20%, Mr. Speaker, is going to 330,000 families right across the province, those families that are actually seeing their costs a lot higher than most folks in urban centres, but we wanted to make sure that families right across the province will benefit. They get 8%; those that are in the rural or remote areas get 20%. That is something that we should all be proud of because this is significant savings for families. Coming from the opposition that has no plans on what to—

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

IMPAIRED DRIVERS

Mr. John Fraser: My question is for the Minister of Transportation. Drug-impaired driving is a public safety issue that is a concern for all of us. I had the opportunity to read the minister's op-ed in the Sun this past weekend, and it's clear to me that the minister understands the pressing need for action, given the prospect of federal legislation on the horizon. I know that the minister met with his federal and provincial counterparts, and I'm sure this was an important topic of discussion when they met.

Mr. Speaker, keeping Ontario's roads safe is the most important job of the minister. Can the minister please provide an update on our government's ongoing efforts to keep roads safe from drug-impaired drivers?

Hon. Steven Del Duca: I want to begin by thanking the member from Ottawa South, not only for the question but for also taking the time to read the op-ed in question. It's much appreciated.

It was important to me, Speaker, for that op-ed to appear in the Ottawa Sun because it's important to let Ontarians know that our government recognizes how pressing this particular issue is. It's also important for us to make sure Ontarians understand that we are taking the necessary actions to address it.

In that op-ed I talked about the path forward and what we need to do to get there. That path includes introducing tougher penalties that match those that are already in place for alcohol-impaired driving, such as a \$180 fine, a licence suspension of three days for the first occurrence and escalating sanctions thereafter, Speaker. Finally, this also includes the possibility of additional penalties after further testing at a police station.

Our government's strong actions will help police get drug-impaired drivers off our roads faster, protecting more of our road users.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. John Fraser: I thank the minister for his answer. I'm pleased to hear that we've taken such strong action to combat drunk driving and drug-impaired driving.

Mr. Speaker, this is an issue that's important to all the families that we serve, and I cannot stress enough the importance of this issue. The Office of the Chief Coroner reported in 2013 that 39% of drivers that were killed in Ontario's roads had alcohol, drugs or both in their system. That's a shocking statistic, especially considering that this is so preventable.

Along with tougher penalties to tackle this issue, we need to have a multifaceted approach. I know that the minister understands this. Could the minister please let members know what else our government is doing to address drug-impaired driving?

Hon. Steven Del Duca: I thank the member for the follow-up question. He is 100% right that combatting drug-impaired driving must go beyond simply tougher penalties; it's also important for us to change behaviours to avoid drug-impaired driving before it happens.

Changing behaviour is done first and foremost through public education. I'm proud that we are working closely with our safety partners—organizations like MADD Canada, the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health, Parachute Canada and the Ontario Association of Chiefs of Police—on our public education efforts.

At one point in time, I think we all recall, unfortunately, both drinking and driving and not wearing a seat belt were considered acceptable practices, but no more, Speaker, thanks to public education. Our next challenge is to make sure that individuals come to see that driving high is the same as those practices that are no longer acceptable.

Our government, in partnership with our safety partners, is up to this challenge. When it comes to keeping roads safe here in the province of Ontario, we will not stop until we get the job done.

ACCESS TO JUSTICE

Mr. Randy Hillier: My question is to the Attorney General. The Macdonald-Laurier Institute released a report last month ranking the provinces on access to justice. Ontario ranked as one of the worst in the country, in spite of the fact that Ontario outspends every other province. We spend more and we get less here in Liberal Ontario. The report once again shows that 43% of all cases are either stayed or withdrawn before trial. That's an incredible number. It demonstrates that either law enforcement or our courts are failing us.

I've asked this question of academics—to the former Attorney General, to the current Attorney General, and no one can give me a straight answer. Will the Attorney General end the injustice and address this injustice that's in our justice system? Or are there simply too many Liberal fundraisers to attend to?

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: I appreciate the member, who is asking a legitimate, serious question. I'm disappointed by the way he ended the question, but that's his prerogative. I don't agree with this characterization.

Speaker, this is a very important issue. We always need to work hard to ensure that we have access to the system, that we have a system in place that is fair and effective for everyone. We recognize that there is always more to do, and I'm very much committed to doing so. Ontario crowns share our commitment, and I would like to thank them for their hard work and dedication every single day in all our communities across the province.

In Ontario—and I'm sure all members know this—the police are responsible for deciding when to lay charges, based on the evidence they have gathered. The difference is that in provinces like British Columbia, New Brunswick and Quebec, you have a pre-charge system in place, where crowns approve charges before they are laid. We need to factor in those types of differences when we're reading those numbers.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Randy Hillier: Once again to the Attorney General: He knows this, but he has failed to do anything. This 43% of stayed and withdrawn cases are not just numbers; they're actual people.

One of those people is a highly decorated Afghan war vet who endured a multi-year criminal prosecution that saw him barred from his hometown. He lost custody of his child. All of the charges were withdrawn, but he still has a \$200,000 debt. And what is the remedy from this government? Nothing, zero, no remedy.

Speaker, for thousands of people, there is no access to justice in Ontario. I expect and the people of Ontario expect and demand that this minister do better and that our courts are actually used to protect people, not to persecute them.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: I take my responsibility as the Attorney General very seriously, and I will continue to strive to do better and better.

Speaker, we have a system where, after charges are laid by the police, the crown begins its assessment of the

strength of the case and the prospect of the case resulting in a conviction. Crowns are required to do this at every stage of the case, even on the day of the trial. The vast majority of the cases—66%—scheduled for trial either proceed to trial or result in a guilty plea on the trial date. The decision to end a prosecution can be one of the most difficult ones for the crowns to make. However, crowns are duty-bound to stay or withdraw charges if there is no reasonable prospect of conviction, or if it's not in the public interest to proceed.

Speaker, we should be very proud that we live in one of the safest jurisdictions in North America. Since 2005, our crime rate continues to go down every single year. We will continue to do work together, along with the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services, to ensure that Ontario remains a leader in public safety across North America.

VISITOR

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Point of order, the member from Hamilton East–Stoney Creek.

Mr. Paul Miller: I'd just like to acknowledge and thank Tegan Elliott, who is our page captain today. Tegan is from Hamilton East–Stoney Creek, and her mother, Christy, is in the audience.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Welcome.

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

The House recessed from 1144 to 1500.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: I ask all members of the House to join me in welcoming a number of people who are standing up for the injured people in this province. From the FAIR association we have Rhona DesRoches, Richard DesRoches and Tammy Kirkwood. We also have, from the Ontario Trial Lawyers Association, John Karapita, Natalie Clarke and Matt Caron. We also have, from IWC, Aidan Macdonald. Let's welcome them all. You can all stand up.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Welcome.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

HYDRO RATES

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: I'm pleased to rise in the House today to thank the number of people who have consistently come forward, sharing their concern over the rising cost of electricity. As you know—I have spoken to the House—the number of petitions I've received is well over 7,000 now, and I want to thank everyone who responded to the invitation to participate and continue to exercise their voice during the committee meeting this past Monday. There was one lady in particular, Isabel,

who could not make it to Toronto because of work, but I want to share her comments as well:

“Ms. Wynne is making a complete mess for a lot of people's lives both now and especially the future. I received a notice from Hydro One telling me that I am very good with my hydro consumption. I am down 30% from last year. And I use less than others around my neighbourhood. Know why this has happened? I can't afford it! I sit in the dark or with a candle burning. I have electric heat but I can't turn it on. I can't afford it. I burn wood. I leave my house to work for 10 to 14 hours and pray the house is slightly warm by the time I get home. What the heck anyway is this company doing with the money we give them? Sending paper gold stars in the mail?”

Ladies and gentlemen, electricity is a serious issue in Ontario. I hope the deputations were seriously considered. I thank everyone from the area of Huron–Bruce who participated: Larry Morrison; Keith Wettlaufer; Norma Schmidt; Marilyn Govier; Marguerite Thomas; the Canadian Federation of Independent Business; Seamless Auto Care, specifically Shawn Greenberg; Don McCabe from OFA; Doug Steele; and Lynda Smith.

JOE FIORITO

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: On Monday, September 26 of this year, Joe Fiorito wrote his last column for the Toronto Star. Joe is a constituent of mine, but, more importantly, he's a true Torontonian. He didn't write about celebrities or even politicians. The people who Joe wrote about were people like Al Gosling, the octogenarian who was evicted from his bachelor apartment. He wrote about the artist Janos Buda, who died in his apartment and wasn't discovered until six months later. He wrote about women who were bitten by bedbugs. He wrote about new refugees. He wrote about Zlatni Struni, the Rolling Stones of Bulgaria. He wrote about people who people never write about and very rarely even speak to.

The very last line of Joe's column was, “See you on the corner.” Well, Joe, I hope I see you on the corner, and I think I speak for everyone in this House when we say thank you for your years of service. Thank you for being the voice for the voiceless in Toronto.

EVENTS IN NORTHUMBERLAND– QUINTE WEST

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: Over the past few weeks, I've had the opportunity to visit all corners of my extensive riding of Northumberland–Quinte West. I've enjoyed the beautiful autumn weather while visiting many fall fairs and community festivals, from the truck and tractor pull at the 185th Port Hope fair to the historic carousel at the 147th Roseneath Fair. My favourite part is seeing all of the exhibits and school displays.

Although the annual Harvest Festival and farmers' market in downtown Cobourg did see rain, it didn't dampen the spirit of hundreds of people checking out the

bounty of fresh, local seasonal produce, honey and preserves available from local vendors.

Cultivate festival in Port Hope, a recipient of a Celebrate Ontario grant, never ceases the opportunity to welcome and impress thousands of visitors as they incorporate a weekend of amazing Canadian music talent and showcase local food and a number of local craft brewers, wineries and cideries.

In the peak of apple season, residents and tourists celebrate AppleFest in my hometown of Brighton: a full downtown street festival that honours all things—you guessed it—apple.

Mr. Speaker, these and so many other events in the riding are the core of the small-town and rural Ontario tourism industry. They draw thousands of visitors from all across our wonderful province.

I invite all members to travel down 401 to Northumberland–Quinte West to check out all we have to offer.

PAUL GREIN

Mr. Bill Walker: Point of order, Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Point of order, the member for Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound.

Mr. Bill Walker: I'd like to seek unanimous consent, if I could, Mr. Speaker, to have page Paul Grein beside me when I read a very special statement.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound is seeking unanimous consent to have a page stand beside him while he does his statement.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: Did you ask him if he wants to do that?

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): You stole my thunder. I was going to say “only if the page wants that.”

Consent is being requested. Do we have it? Agreed?

One moment, please. I'm just going to seek consultation.

I might have been on the verge of saying it too, but I know that I'm going to rely on the member that our pages are never put in a position to be compromised in terms of partisan or party or politics. If I'm okay with that, I think everyone would be all right. Do we agree? Yes. So if our page would take a position, then I believe the member will have his opportunity to give his discussion.

Mr. Bill Walker: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to recognize a very fine and bright young man from Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound as he winds up his four-week tenure at Queen's Park as a legislative page.

The page position is one of considerable honour and importance, and Paul Grein has served members of this House with utmost respect and a maturity that is truly beyond his age.

Clearly, Paul, who is just in grade 7 at St. Peter and St. Paul's School in Durham, is motivated by a desire to serve, much like his political hero, John Diefenbaker, the 13th Prime Minister of Canada, who was also born in southern Grey county.

Last year, Paul honoured his hero by making a short video in front of Diefenbaker's birthplace at 144 Barbara Street in the village of Neustadt, in the county of Grey, a project that got him shortlisted for a national history contest. Among the 150 student competitors for the 2015 Young Citizens award, two were from Grey county: Paul Grein, and Robbie Hann of Chatsworth.

Paul's video went viral. With the help of local MP Larry Miller, the video made it all of the way to the Prime Minister's office and, as a result, earned young Paul an opportunity to meet Stephen Harper.

But the big win for Paul was yet to come. His video project also led the federal Conservative government to propose a plan to purchase Diefenbaker's old home and establish it as a national historic site.

I guess the question on everybody's mind now is: Will Paul one day run to become Prime Minister? Only Paul knows, and he has offered us this clue: “Learning from history I see that living in Grey county, having a rural background and determination can lead to great things. Time will tell if I can realize my dream of being a part of Canada's political history.”

I say that he is already there, Mr. Speaker. Paul is a talented young man who may very well one day stand in the Ontario Legislature or the House of Commons as Prime Minister.

If you decide to go the provincial route, Paul, I hope you allow me a few more years of the privilege of serving the wonderful people of Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): A little edgy, but okay.

DISASTER RELIEF

M^{me} France Gélinas: Here I have a letter from Dianne Secord, a very concerned citizen from Gogama. It reads as follows:

“Minister,

“I am sure by now you are well aware of the struggle we have endured for over 18 months.

“We are pleading with you to please order CN to clean up the awful mess they've made here.

“I know we are a small dot on the map, but what you need to understand, Minister, is that we all have families. I have grandchildren; my parents, who are in their eighties; sisters; brothers; friends.

“We all see dead fish floating in our lake. Every day we see oil on our lake. At the Makami site, the smell is horrible. It's either oil one day or the dead fish smell the next.

“CN has gone to the media and told them that it's cleaned and that we, the town people, don't understand the science and how to read the results and so on.

1510

“Well, they are right. I am not a scientist, but I know what I see with my own eyes, and I know what our Gogama looked like and felt like before they ruined it.

"I am worried about the long-term effects this will have on the generations to come. So again, Minister, I beg you to please have CN clean their mess."

CN says "they have met all of the Ministry of the Environment requirements so I'm not sure who I'm angry with, but in my heart, I cannot for one second believe that our government would allow this mess to go on."

Dianne, out of desperation, will join the people of Gogama and Mattagami First Nation for a protest on Highway 144 on Monday. All are welcome to join.

Water is life.

KIDNEY WALK

Ms. Harinder Malhi: The Kidney Foundation of Canada plans an annual walk amongst other fundraising activities throughout the year to create visibility in the community about its mission.

The Kidney Walk took place in several communities across Ontario on September 25, including in my riding of Brampton–Springdale, at Loafer's Lake. I had the opportunity to attend and to meet with participants, along with regional councillor Michael Palleschi.

In Brampton alone, we had in excess of 120 people who actively participated, raised funds and walked the 5K. It was an especially important walk for the individuals who have been affected by the disease and were able to share their lived experiences.

While in Brampton the event is still at its infant stage, the objective is to create a fun event with activities to encourage participation and raise funds, while delivering awareness about the disease. There was also a jelly bean count, balloons for children, raffles, guessing the number of kidneys along the path, a barbecue, a local artist and music. The Brampton chapter aspires to further enhance the day for families by having a host of other activities.

The chair of the Brampton chapter, Pauline Young, did a phenomenal job with her team: Carmen, Wilson, Trixie, Joanne George, Sonia, Angie and Amanpreet. They are all recognized for all of their hard work to organize a successful event for a great cause.

On the day of the event, the chapter raised an estimated \$27,000 to \$30,000 in donations, which they continue to add up.

NUCLEAR INDUSTRY

Mr. John Yakubuski: Since 1945, when the ZEEP research reactor sustained the first controlled nuclear reaction outside of the United States, the nuclear industry has played a vital role in our lives.

Today I welcome representatives from the Canadian Nuclear Association to Queen's Park.

In Chalk River, in my riding of Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke, Canadian Nuclear Laboratories has an outstanding and amazing record of research and discovery that has impacted all of our lives in a most positive fashion. The National Research Universal reactor, NRU,

which started up the year I was born, is still noted for its versatility and its high neutron flux.

Here in Ontario, nuclear power consistently provides almost 60% of all of the electricity produced, powering industries, business and homes with zero greenhouse gas emissions. The nuclear industry generates almost \$7 billion annually and provides 60,000 highly skilled, high-paying jobs, with the majority being right here in Ontario. With the refurbishments at Bruce Power and Darlington, we can count on that for a long time to come.

The planned refurbishments will have a \$25-billion direct impact over the next 15 years and will ensure that some of our brightest minds will continue to be a vital part of our intellectual property. I've had the opportunity to visit and tour both Darlington and Bruce, and I look forward to the completion of these projects.

Ontario's economic future depends on an abundant supply of safe, reliable, clean power. Our nuclear plants deliver that in spades.

I want to thank the Canadian Nuclear Association for its tremendous contribution and commend them for being continually focused on making our lives better.

STUDENT HOUSING

Ms. Catherine Fife: Today I would like to bring to the assembly's attention an issue in Waterloo region that is becoming an ugly annual tradition: students arriving at Waterloo's universities in the fall and being told they don't have a home, even though they have paid for one.

Students are scattered across the region in hotel rooms as they pay for apartments that are not finished. Students are left with few options when they discover their paid-for units aren't ready in the fall. Pursuing post-secondary education is already an expensive investment. Faced with homelessness and insecure housing, students are much less likely to achieve academic success.

Students tell me that they feel like they are being taken advantage of. Developers appear to be exploiting Ontario's housing system, leaving students in insecure housing situations.

What can students do? If dealing directly with a delinquent developer fails, students can contact the provincial Landlord and Tenant Board. Unfortunately, the way that system currently works, developers can delay hearings, often rescheduling them for months later in another semester, when students are not residing in Waterloo region. Class action claims have been easily broken up by developers into individual cases, further delaying the process.

Even when the LTB decides in favour of students, students must pursue the developer themselves to ensure the ruling is enforced. That can mean hiring lawyers and using the courts—costly and time-consuming options that students do not have the means for.

Students in this province deserve better. They need the protections that they are entitled to. I'm calling on this government to find a solution.

CANADIAN CANCER SURVIVOR NETWORK

Ms. Ann Hoggarth: This evening, I will have the honour of hosting the Canadian Cancer Survivor Network reception here at Queen's Park for the third time. As a survivor myself, I would have appreciated having access to this wonderful resource when I was going through cancer.

The CCSN works to promote health by conducting educational activities for cancer patients, caregivers and survivors on the physical and financial impacts and other relevant topics associated with managing cancer. They promote health by providing individuals living with cancer, and their caregivers, with access to related counselling, information or support group programs.

CCSN helps the families who they connect with to engage in discussion about evidence-based best practices to alleviate the medical, emotional and social costs of cancer and encourage research on ways to overcome barriers to optimum care and follow-up for survivors in Canada.

At CCSN, a network of patients, survivors, friends, families, community partners and sponsors work together, taking action to promote the very best quality of life for those experiencing the same terrible disease they once faced.

Please join me in congratulating the Canadian Cancer Survivor Network for all of the great work that they do. I invite all of you to come by their reception this evening in room 228.

VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Point of order, the Minister of Education.

Hon. Mitzie Hunter: Thank you, Speaker. If you would just allow me to introduce some guests from the College of Early Childhood Educators: Beth Deazeley, the registrar and CEO; Cynthia Abel, director of registration and member services; Saeed Walji, deputy registrar; and Ashley Bergwerff, who is the external relations manager. Please welcome them.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Welcome. Thank you for being here.

I thank all members for their statements.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

ALBANIAN HERITAGE MONTH ACT, 2016

LOI DE 2016 SUR LE MOIS DU PATRIMOINE ALBANAIS

Mr. Qaadri moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 36, An Act to proclaim the month of November as Albanian Heritage Month / Projet de loi 36, Loi

proclamant le mois de novembre Mois du patrimoine albanais.

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

First reading agreed to.

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

Mr. Shafiq Qaadri: We look forward not only to debating this bill on Thursday, but also to the reception that will be following it on November 3.

PROTECTING STUDENTS ACT, 2016

LOI DE 2016 PROTÉGEANT LES ÉLÈVES

Ms. Hunter moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 37, An Act to amend the Early Childhood Educators Act, 2007 and the Ontario College of Teachers Act, 1996 / Projet de loi 37, Loi modifiant la Loi de 2007 sur les éducatrices et les éducateurs de la petite enfance et la Loi de 1996 sur l'Ordre des enseignantes et des enseignants de l'Ontario.

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

First reading agreed to.

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

Hon. Mitzie Hunter: It is my pleasure to introduce the Protecting Students Act, which, if passed, would protect our children and students by making the disciplinary process for the province's educators more transparent and decisive.

1520

Ontario's educators do an excellent job supporting our children and students—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): One moment: Is this a minister's statement or is this just speaking to it? Are you going to—

Hon. Mitzie Hunter: Just speaking to it, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Okay, so it's the explanatory notes, please.

Hon. Mitzie Hunter: Speaker, in rare circumstances where discipline is required, families, parents, students and teachers deserve a fair, transparent and efficient process that protects our children and maintains the public interest. The proposed legislation and subsequent regulations would make the Ontario College of Teachers' disciplinary process more efficient, help better protect students and teachers, and reduce the potential for conflicts of interest. Our government is taking an important step to make sure Ontario families continue to have confidence—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I'm sorry; I'm going to have to deal with this. You're getting notes from somebody who is not paying attention.

I am asking members, when they introduce bills, to read from the explanatory notes. You get to make speeches when the bill is introduced or in ministers'

statements. Read from the explanatory notes, please. That's a statement for everybody.

Hon. Mitzie Hunter: I look forward to every member in this House supporting the bill.

ISLAMIC HERITAGE MONTH ACT, 2016

LOI DE 2016 SUR LE MOIS DU PATRIMOINE MUSULMAN

Ms. Armstrong moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 38, An Act to proclaim the month of October Islamic Heritage Month / Projet de loi 38, Loi proclamant le mois d'octobre Mois du patrimoine musulman.

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

First reading agreed to.

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

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: The bill proclaims the month of October of each year to be Islamic Heritage Month.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I can't argue with that one. Thank you.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

ONTARIO AGRICULTURE WEEK

Hon. Jeff Leal: It's an honour to rise in the House today to celebrate Ontario Agriculture Week and to thank those who work hard every single day to make the safe and high-quality food that we all enjoy in the province of Ontario.

Farmers on almost 52,000 family farms across this great province wake up at the crack of dawn each morning to harvest an impressive abundance from our fields and farms, our orchards and our vineyards. Much of this bounty makes its way to the tables of consumers so that we can enjoy it.

I had the opportunity to meet with our hard-working egg farmers just last week to enjoy a delicious omelette made with fresh, high-quality eggs produced right here in Ontario. In fact, did you know that egg production has increased almost 60% in the last 50 years?

Approximately 65% of our harvest is purchased by local food processors, whether they are bakers, butchers or brewers, and is transformed into the highest-quality products for our enjoyment.

Our farmers are the foundation of our agri-food sector—a sector that has helped us build our nation's economy, and one which continues to grow today. It's a sector that today generates more than \$36 billion towards our GDP and employs more than 790,000 Ontarians. That's almost one in nine jobs across this great province.

Ontario agriculture is a sector that has changed and adapted to meet the growing needs of not only our own diverse population but the global market as well. In 2015, agri-food exports reached over \$14 billion—up almost 13% from the previous year. It's our farmers who have helped Ontario gain a well-deserved reputation for producing reliable, safe and high-quality food around the world. We are grateful for what our farmers do for this province, and as a government, across ministries, we are proud to support them and our agri-food sector.

The Premier's recent throne speech emphasized just how committed our government is to supporting our agri-food industry and to laying the foundation for long-term economic growth in rural Ontario.

Mr. Speaker, our government is committed to the vital health and well-being of rural Ontario—for example, things like hydro and infrastructure. Our government heard from our residents that hydro rates were a concern. That's why, if the proposed Ontario rebate for electricity—

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

Mr. Randy Hillier: On a point of order, Speaker: I recall clearly the throne speech and I think maybe the member might want to review this, but there was no reference to agriculture in the throne speech, as he just mentioned.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): It's not a point of order.

Hon. Jeff Leal: The member is absolutely wrong when he said that.

Our government recognizes that natural gas is an important source of energy for rural Ontario and a vital part of Ontario's energy supply. That's why, as part of our government's Moving Ontario Forward plan, we have committed \$230 million to programs that will help rural communities partner with utilities to expand natural gas access in rural Ontario, including the introduction of the Natural Gas Access Loan program in 2016.

As many of you know, another critical issue for rural Ontario, of course, is infrastructure. Through the largest infrastructure investment in Ontario's history—almost \$160 billion over 12 years—we are helping people in their everyday lives to improve their quality of life. Mr. Speaker, as you well know, that all starts with infrastructure.

We are expanding the Ontario Community Infrastructure Fund, tripling it from \$100 million to \$300 million by 2019, and we are making significant investments in broadband across this great province.

Since 2007, my ministry has committed more than \$210 million in rural and northern Ontario to expand the digital economy, including \$90 million toward the Southwestern Integrated Fibre Technology project to expand broadband in southwestern Ontario, something that was advocated by the Western Ontario Wardens' Caucus.

It's clear that agriculture is the foundation to our province and indeed, in many ways, the future of the

province of Ontario. Agriculture sustains us, provides jobs and opportunities for Ontarians across the province and links our rural communities to urban centres to support the ultimate goal of feeding us.

I'm pleased to share with my colleagues some examples of what our government is doing to help further our primary producers in Ontario. Early this week, I had the honour of joining Minister Naidoo-Harris in Milton at Gordon Food Service—the largest family-owned food service distributor in North America—to announce that we're providing them with \$60,000 through the Local Food Investment Fund for their Ontario Ingredients for Success project. This investment will make it easier for food service operators and restaurateurs to source and promote Ontario food on their menus.

Mr. Speaker, this announcement was one of 29 local food projects totalling \$1.5 million in funding that our government is providing through the Greenbelt Fund to support local food projects through the Local Food Investment Fund.

This is part of our broader commitment of \$6 billion in funding to the Greenbelt over three years to continue to connect primary producers to new markets and encourage more locally grown food so that everybody is choosing Ontario.

These investments are making a difference, Mr. Speaker. The Greenbelt Fund has realized a 13-to-1 return on investment on grants made since 2010.

The federal and provincial governments have committed \$45 million through Growing Forward 2, and we're supporting projects that provide a range of marketing development initiatives, business management solutions, and equipment and infrastructure improvements, to help strengthen the health of Ontario's soils and waters through environmental stewardship initiatives; and our Growth Plan for Northern Ontario, which will be used to enhance the support for our agriculture, aquaculture and food processing sectors in northern Ontario communities. We are also engaging First Nations and Métis to identify new opportunities. Mr. Speaker, we are committed to supporting our farmers and our agri-food sector.

I want to take a moment to address the abnormally dry conditions in some regions of the province and the impact this has had on the growing season for many crops and livestock operations this past summer, including in my own hometown of Peterborough county. I appreciate the strain these difficult weather conditions are having on family farms, and I know Ontarians share their concerns.

I can tell you when I visited some farms in Prince Edward-Hastings to look at those crops in those dry conditions, it brought a tear to my eye. I have personally visited some of the most affected areas in the province to meet with producers and have witnessed first-hand the devastation these dry conditions have caused for our crops.

I want to assure the House that our government has the resources available to help farmers deal with the impacts of dry weather. We have a range of robust business risk management programs to assist producers, including

production insurance, the risk management program, AgriStability and AgriInvest. I've directed my staff to ensure that these programs are delivered in an efficient and sensitive way for all our producers. We will continue to monitor the situation closely and provide information and assistance to our farmers as required.

1530

I would also like to take a moment to remind everyone that, with Thanksgiving just around the corner, it's a great time to support our farmers and buy delicious, locally grown and harvested foods and beverages for their festive meals, to enjoy with family and friends. For those families that have challenging circumstances, I invite all 107 members to try and help them out too during the time of Thanksgiving.

As we celebrate the harvest, it sounds like a good time to give all Ontarians the opportunity to enjoy the bounty that our province provides by donating food items, money or time to a local food bank, food program or other charitable organizations. This is also a wonderful opportunity for Ontario producers to build relationships with their local food organizations by donating their fresh, nutritious local food to help those who need it most, while also benefiting from the food donation tax credit for farmers that was brought about by the member from Sarnia, our colleague Mr. Bailey.

I wish you all a happy Ontario Agriculture Week, and I hope that everyone in this House, as well as Ontarians, takes the time this week to celebrate our farmers, their contributions and the amazing agricultural food sector that I'm so proud to represent each and every day. Mr. Speaker, as we all know, "Good things grow in Ontario."

WORLD TEACHERS' DAY

Hon. Mitzie Hunter: I am pleased to stand in the House today in recognition of World Teachers' Day. I want to thank the teachers in Ontario for the important work that they do each and every day to support Ontario's students. We have some of the best teachers in the world, and I know that their hard work is helping our students succeed. Ontario's graduation rate is up, student achievement is rising, and full-day kindergarten is available to all four- and five-year-olds in publicly funded schools.

Perhaps most importantly, our high school graduation rate has increased to 85.5%. This is the highest level in Ontario's history, and that means that more students than ever are graduating with the skills and the knowledge that they need to reach their full potential. Since 2004, about 190,000 more students have graduated than would have if the graduation rate had remained at the 2004 level. That's roughly equivalent to the population of Guelph and Brantford combined.

Much of this excellent progress is thanks to the great work of Ontario's dedicated teachers. Our teachers are some of the best in the world, and that is due in large part to the high-quality teacher education programs that we have in place. While these programs are recognized inter-

nationally, we are aware that teachers are encountering increased expectations and new challenges in the classroom. That is why we introduced the enhanced teacher education program in September 2015. This four-semester program doubled the practicum requirement to a minimum of 80 days and introduced mandatory core content. This enhanced program is part of our efforts to build confidence in our publicly funded education system.

As a government and as Ontarians, we have a lot to be proud of in terms of student achievement. Our students continue to perform well globally. As part of the 2012 Program for International Student Assessment, PISA, Ontario's students performed at the Canadian average and above the OECD average in mathematics, reading and science.

I know that we all want to give all of our children the best possible start in life, and that is why our government is so proud of our full-day kindergarten program. Since the program began, Ontario's full-day kindergarten program has enrolled more than one million students. This is an important milestone. This innovative program represents one of our biggest investments and one of the most significant transformations of our education system in a generation. We know that full-day kindergarten supports the continuum of learning and better prepares our children for grade 1.

We could not have achieved these results without the hard work of our teachers, working tirelessly to support our students. Together, we're making progress to support student achievement, equity and well-being. We know that every day, our teachers work very hard to support all of our students, especially those from diverse backgrounds and our indigenous communities, and students with special education needs.

As we celebrate World Teachers' Day today, I want to thank all of the teachers and educators across Ontario for their outstanding work.

Applause.

Hon. Mitzie Hunter: Yes, for sure. Absolutely.

Thank you for your leadership, your passion and your dedication to ensuring that our students are successful and on a path to reach their full potential.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Statements by ministries?

Before I move to responses, I want to speak to two issues, and I'll make it quick. Number one, when we introduce bills for first reading, the tradition is and the convention is that you speak to what the content of the bill is. That's why I said what I said earlier. Please make your statements germane. All of the other debate pieces you want to do get dealt with during the debate on the bill.

The second issue is, points of order during delivery of statements by ministries are very unusual. I don't want to do that. If I've given the impression that I asked somebody to do that, what I was trying to say is, the opposition is given opportunity to respond, so when that circumstance happens—they have an uninterrupted opportunity to give the speech; the opposition has the un-

interrupted opportunity to give the response. It would be a lot happier place—there's a place for debate. There's a place for that. And we also do not do points of order in the middle of question period.

While I'm in the mood of offering guidance and a teachable moment, I wanted to offer that to everybody. Thank you.

It is now time for members' responses.

ONTARIO AGRICULTURE WEEK

Mr. Toby Barrett: As we mark Ontario Agriculture Week, I think of the opening lines of John Keats's poem, *To Autumn*, which begins:

Season of mists and mellow fruitfulness,
Close bosom-friend of the maturing sun....

'Tis truly a season of mists and warm days and moisture and humidity condensing with the cold nights. We're blessed in Ontario with a climate and a micro-climate conducive to planting and growing, nurturing and harvesting such a tremendous variety of crops, both annual and perennial, grains and fruit and vegetables, ranging from winter wheat to tobacco to specialties like Belgian endive. It's also a climate that supports our land of milk and honey and beef and eggs and lamb and veal; a climate that permits hay and oats grown in Rainy River, cheese-making in the Slate River Valley, carrots in the Bradford Marsh, grapes in Prince Edward county, cherries in my home area of Haldimand-Norfolk, all made possible through our soil types, our rich arable land and our access to water—and also made possible to reach markets near and afar through two centuries of farm and food processing experience and wisdom, business management and labour management, advances in technology and innovation that better enable our agri-food business sector to continually adapt to the opportunities and the challenges of Mother Nature, all within a fiercely competitive market both at home and abroad.

We have benefited as a civilization from agriculture for thousands of years, and it's quite appropriate to set aside one week to recognize that benefit.

WORLD TEACHERS' DAY

Mr. Lorne Coe: I thank the Minister of Education for her statement this afternoon and the opportunity to respond on World Teachers' Day.

Speaker, each year, on October 5, we celebrate the incredible work teachers do shaping our province's young minds and future leaders. Teachers are entrusted to shape and mould the minds of tomorrow and are called upon to go above and beyond for our children. Whether it's buying supplies, prepping lessons or staying up late and marking into the night, teachers are the lifeblood of our education system. From across the province, we hear stories of teachers going that extra mile to make sure their class has a special day.

1540

The American educator and author Peter Drucker said this when discussing the teaching profession: “Teaching is the only major occupation ... for which we have not yet developed tools that make an average person capable of competence and performance. In teaching we rely on the ‘naturals,’ the ones who somehow know how to teach.” Speaker, it’s a monumental task.

Our engineers, lawyers, doctors, electricians and, yes, even politicians can all name a teacher who helped steer them on a particular path and who inspired them to follow their dreams. I am honoured to stand here in this place on World Teachers’ Day and salute all the teachers across this great province.

ONTARIO AGRICULTURE WEEK

Mr. John Vanthof: It’s an honour for me to be able to stand up today on behalf of my leader, Andrea Horwath, and the NDP caucus to recognize Ontario Agriculture Week. To me, it’s about farmers.

Since the first person in Ontario planted a seed or tended a tree, a lot of things have changed about agriculture. But the one thing that hasn’t is that when they plant that seed or tend that tree or raise that animal, they have the faith that despite whatever happens, they will be able to harvest a crop or get milk or get meat. That’s the one faith that hasn’t changed, and that sustains us all. Even for people at home who grow a garden, it’s that faith.

The difference between the people at home who grow a garden and the farm families across this province who every year risk everything to plant that crop—that’s the difference. They risk despite weather. They risk despite crop markets. Every year they come back. It’s something that’s inherent in their soul: to want to grow, to provide for us all.

I think we all, not only in Agriculture Week, but every day, deserve to keep that in mind, that every day they take that risk from dawn to dusk—and now 24 hours a day, often. Farming has changed. Your typical farm has gotten a lot bigger. Now, many farms are multi-family, multi-generational, and often there are farming activities going on 24 hours a day. That has changed, and society has to recognize that.

The government has to work with these, which are still family farms, but they have different demands. They provide thousands of jobs in our province, but they also have increased demands. We have to recognize that and work with these farms and work with the farmers, because the one thing that hasn’t changed is that, on all of our behalf, they have the faith and they take the risk to plant those seeds, whether it’s on one acre or 10,000, or whether it’s one sow or 5,000. They have that faith, and we should all thank them for it.

WORLD TEACHERS’ DAY

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: It’s my pleasure to rise today on behalf of Ontario NDP leader Andrea Horwath and all

New Democrats to speak to World Teachers’ Day and thank all teachers for their valuable work.

Ontarians are fortunate to benefit from highly qualified teachers who work tirelessly, both inside and outside the classroom, to deliver quality education and life skills to our next generation of leaders. By partnering with parents and volunteers to coordinate local initiatives like food drives, breakfast programs and charity runs, teachers exemplify the very best that our communities have to offer.

Unfortunately, under this Liberal government, education in Ontario has reached a tipping point, where education workers are overworked and undervalued. The schools they work in have fallen into a state of disrepair and now face a \$15-billion backlog. Students are unable to receive the special education resources they require, while teachers and other education workers are left scrambling to fill the gaps.

This government has side-stepped the collective bargaining rights of our teachers and education workers at every turn. They imposed a contract in 2012 and legislated teachers back to work last year. This blatant disrespect for our education workers undermines the importance of their role and professionalism.

Communities are divided as they compete for precious education dollars to keep their local schools open while the government fast-tracks the process for schools to close and reduces community input.

The government must work with educators, not against them. Ontario teachers know that it’s our neighbourhood schools that anchor our communities. Our schools should not be under a perpetual threat of closure. We need classrooms with working heat in the winter and air conditioning in the summer, so that students, teachers, and all education workers in the building can focus on their work and not the temperature. We need an education system focused on student needs, not numbers. And we need to value the professional judgment of teachers as the pinnacle of student evaluation. Teachers must have the discretion that their profession requires when assessing their students.

New Democrats know that quality education begins with quality teachers. We are ready to create an education environment that leverages the professionalism and dedication of all education workers in Ontario.

PETITIONS**AUTOMOBILE INSURANCE**

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: This is a petition to the Legislative Assembly.

“Request for Public Inquiry into the Medical Evidence
“Whereas all Ontario’s drivers are legislated under the Insurance Act (Ontario) to attend insurer medical examinations (IMEs) when making a claim for injuries in a motor vehicle accident (MVA); and

“Whereas there is a flawed process by which medical experts are selected by Ontario’s insurance companies and a failure to ensure that only objective and qualified medical evidence is submitted by practising health care providers in good standing with their regulatory colleges; and

“Whereas the flawed and partisan medical reports are used in the decision process and have caused a significant and costly backlog in our courts for victims who are without treatments and other resources.

“Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly to request a public inquiry into the medical evidence used to delay and deny injury claims in Ontario’s courts and administrative tribunals.”

I agree with this petition, I will affix my signature, and I thank all those involved with making this petition happen.

DIABETES GLUCOSE MONITORING

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: I do have a petition here with, I would say, hundreds of signatures.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the technological and research advancements alter the findings of the 2011 Medical Advisory Secretariat document ‘Continuous Glucose Monitoring for Patients with Diabetes: An Evidence-Based Analysis’; and

“Whereas the Endocrine Society’s continuous glucose monitoring clinical practice guidelines recommend continuous glucose monitoring used by people living with type 1 diabetes, and has deemed that the benefits justify the costs; and

“Whereas Canadians living with diabetes have the right to affordable and timely access to prescribed devices and insurance coverage; and that governments have the responsibility to guarantee fair access to devices and supplies to all Canadians, no matter their income or where they live; and

“Whereas government coverage of continuous glucose monitors is increasing internationally but is not available in Canada;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to consider financial coverage for continuous glucose monitoring through the Ontario Assistive Devices Program or other appropriate provincial government program.”

I agree with this petition, will affix my signature and send it to the desk with Simone.

OPPOSITION DAY

PRIVATIZATION OF PUBLIC ASSETS

Ms. Andrea Horwath: I would like to move the following:

Whereas Ontario’s energy system was founded with the principle “Power at cost” and that “The gifts of nature

are for the people,” which built Ontario into an economic powerhouse;

Whereas people and businesses should be able to count on affordable, reliable energy to ensure prosperity and give a bright future to Ontario’s next generations;

Whereas our hydroelectricity system was owned by the people of Ontario and delivered affordable, reliable electricity and economic prosperity for over 100 years;

Whereas the Liberal party did not run on a plan to privatize Ontario’s hydro system;

Whereas privatization of our hydro system under Conservative and Liberal governments has driven up generation costs from 4.3 cents per kilowatt hour in 2002 to an on-peak price of 18 cents per kilowatt hour in 2016;

1550

Whereas Ontarians have reason to be concerned that the Liberal government is planning to facilitate the privatization of local distribution companies such as Toronto Hydro;

Whereas as many as 80% of people across Ontario oppose the privatization of Hydro One;

Whereas people of Ontario deserve to have a say before any more of Hydro One is sold off to private investors or any other privatization takes place;

Whereas the next provincial election in Ontario is now less than two years away;

Therefore the Legislative Assembly calls on the Liberal government to take immediate steps to stop any further privatization of Ontario’s hydro system, including both Hydro One and any local distribution companies such as Toronto Hydro.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Ms. Horwath has moved opposition day 2. Ms. Horwath.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: I’m proud to rise on behalf of the NDP caucus to debate this motion this afternoon. I know that a number of my caucus colleagues will be speaking to this motion as well. But the reason I am glad to be able to do so is because it speaks to the kind of change that the people of Ontario are looking for. People need this Premier and this Liberal government to stop any further privatization of our electricity system. They need to stop the sell-off of Hydro One and stop any attempt to help incentivize the sell-off of local distribution companies like Toronto Hydro.

Our hydro system should be working for the benefit of the people of Ontario, not for private investors and this government’s friends. It should work for the hard-working families who exist all across this province who are struggling to pay their bills. People should have a pretty good idea, when their hydro bill comes in, what it’s going to cost them from month to month. It should be a fairly predictable bill to be able to understand what you are likely going to have to pay every month. It should be somewhat consistent month after month, Speaker. Most of all it, it should be affordable. It shouldn’t break the bank to have to pay your hydro bill. Speaker, I don’t think that’s too much to ask. I don’t think it’s too much to ask in a province like Ontario.

All of us, I think, know what a great place Ontario is, what a great place Ontario can be—a place of opportunity; a place where people should be able to work hard, earn a good living and have some real security in their lives; a place where we can take good care of each other, where we make sure that our aging parents and grandparents have the care that they need, where our children have the best schools and supports in their classroom, and where all of our young people have every opportunity to grow to reach their full potential. That's the kind of Ontario that people want to live in. That's why families want to build their lives in our communities. That's why students want to study in our universities and our colleges, and stay in Ontario once they've graduated. It's why new Canadians want to move into this province and put their skills and talents to work right here in Ontario. We live in a great province that can offer so much for the people who live here.

But the fact is, we are at a tipping point right now, Speaker. Month after month, it's getting harder and harder for people to live here and build a good life—for families and especially for young people. Today, a lot of people's wages are flat. Their incomes aren't growing even though their costs keep going up. Everything keeps getting more and more expensive, and for a lot of people, nothing's worse than the cost of their hydro bill.

Le coût de l'électricité fait du mal à beaucoup de gens. Beaucoup de gens ont du mal à payer leurs factures d'électricité.

People in my riding of Hamilton Centre, people in every community across this province, live with uncertainty. They live with worry, with stress and with fear—fear because they don't know how much their next electricity bill is going to cost, how much more their electricity bill is going to cost.

Last week, you may recall, I was in Niagara with the MPP for Niagara Falls. We met a wonderful couple named Laura and Fran. Laura and Fran welcomed us into their home. We thought that was very generous of them. We sat around their kitchen table, and together we were looking at their hydro bills. In the past two years, their hydro bill has tripled—literally tripled in two years, in just two years, while this Premier has been in office. Their most recent bill that they pulled out to show us was about \$370. That's what they're being charged for hydro. But while we were there, the mail carrier actually arrived. As it happened, the mail carrier had their new hydro bill in hand. Laura and Fran opened the envelope, Speaker, and it was a bill for \$677 for a basic necessity of life, for keeping the lights on in their home in Ontario. Literally, Laura broke down into tears. That's how worried she is. That's how frustrated, how fearful she is about their ability to make ends meet in this province that they've called home all of their lives.

That's what's happening to thousands upon thousands of people across the province. The privatization of our hydro system, our generating and transmission systems, by successive Conservative and Liberal governments is driving hydro rates higher and higher, and people like Laura and Fran can't afford it. It's not working for them.

I also visited a woman named Hannah last week. She lives on Hamilton Mountain. Her MPP, the MPP for Hamilton Mountain, and I visited with Hannah, a woman who has two sons. She's a single mom. Her kids are six and 11 years old. Like every other mom in this province, all Hannah wants is the best for her children. She wants to make sure they have every opportunity that they need, and she wants what's best for them. I visited Hannah in a two-bedroom basement apartment where she's raising her kids. She opened her door to me, and we sat together with the MPP for Hamilton Mountain and started looking over her hydro bill for the last couple of years.

Three and a half years ago, when Hannah moved into that apartment, she was paying \$60 a month for hydro. Her most recent bill was \$324. She actually had to take money that she was setting aside for her sons' RESPs and use that to pay her hydro bill. She had to take the money that she was setting aside for her kids' future, for their future education, so that she could pay her hydro bill. How is this single mom with two boys living in an apartment supposed to be able to pay a \$324 hydro bill? How is she supposed to do that? How is it possible for her to make that payment, because it's become so high and unmanageable? How is that right, Speaker, that a single mom in Ontario has to make those kinds of choices?

I met Kristin as well last week. I was with the MPP for Kitchener–Waterloo, her MPP. Kristin welcomed us into her home and opened up her bills to show us what she's grappling with. Kristin is a young mother. She's paying \$1,300 a month for child care, which lots of moms and dads are doing here in Ontario. The cost of child care is totally unaffordable for very many families—in fact, most families—who are being forced to pay, in some cases, more than their rent and more than their mortgage for safe, quality child care here in Ontario. She's also trying to pay off student debt. So she's got \$1,300 in child care costs, she's got a student loan, tens of thousands of dollars' worth of student loans that she's trying to pay off—and, by the way, this government is charging her interest on the student loans, turning a profit on students who are trying to just make their bills. It's quite a disgrace. It's absolutely wrong, Speaker, that this Liberal government is making a profit on Kristin while at the same time making her life harder because her hydro bills are going through the roof.

We definitely need to take the interest off student loans, and we need the government out of the business of profiting off the backs of students. That's another thing that we are fighting for. But, of course, on top of that, Kristin and her husband are seeing their hydro bills increasing month after month as well, like every other family in this province. They're being charged three times as much today for hydro as they were paying in the exact same period just a year ago. That is absolutely unbelievable, Speaker, but it is unfortunately the truth.

These are the stories that I hear from every corner of this province. In one year, Kristin's bill tripled. It increased threefold.

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People are falling behind on their payments. Seniors are turning the lights out and living without air conditioning in a summer when the heat is going up to 40 degrees. Thousands of people are being disconnected—tens of thousands of people are being disconnected—because they can't pay their hydro bills. Businesses are saying that they would love to expand here in Ontario and hire more workers, but they can't do it because they can't pay for the cost of hydro, let alone expand their businesses and employ more people.

The Premier should know this, Speaker. None of this should be a surprise to the Premier of our province. Since this Premier came into office in 2013, peak hydro rates have increased by more than 50%. Since this Premier has been in office, the peak hydro rates have increased by more than 50%. No wonder people are disappointed in this government, no wonder people are concerned about the future; because nobody voted for that and yet that's what they got.

The disappointment out there is palpable, but instead of fixing the problem, instead of getting to the bottom of the cause of rising hydro costs and doing something about it, instead of putting this government to work to lower hydro bills by addressing the fundamental problems in the electricity system, instead of making better decisions on the electricity file that actually put people first, this Premier is making decisions that drive those hydro costs even higher.

Les gens sont déçus par cette première ministre parce qu'elle rend leur vie plus difficile.

There is a reason that the cost of hydro is out of control in Ontario. There is a reason for that, Speaker. There's a reason that Laura and Fran, and Hannah and Kristin, and so many other Ontarians are facing bills that have tripled in just one or two short years. There's a reason that people are facing a crisis trying to pay their hydro bills in Ontario today. And that is because this Liberal government keeps on privatizing our hydro system when it should belong to the people of Ontario—and selling off Hydro One will make the problem worse. Encouraging and creating tax incentives for the sell-off of local distribution companies like Toronto Hydro will make the problem even worse, as well. But that's exactly what this government is doing: Piece by piece, company by company, the Liberals continue to privatize our electricity system. And that does one thing: It helps drive up the cost of electricity for families and businesses.

Despite the fact that 80% of Ontarians oppose the sell-off of Hydro One, despite the fact that the independent Financial Accountability Officer found no financial evidence to support the sell-off, despite the fact that hundreds of municipalities are against the privatization scheme, the Premier carries on with her plan to privatize Hydro One, no matter what it costs the people of Ontario. And now, as the mayor of Toronto starts talking about selling off Toronto Hydro, we see that the Premier's 2015 budget actually created a brand new tax giveaway to encourage cities to sell off their local utilities.

The media is reporting, "Premier Kathleen Wynne's government will be all ears if Mayor John Tory asks for ... concessions to expedite the sale of Toronto Hydro." Here's another quote: "The province believes that privatizing Toronto Hydro ... is a good idea and Queen's Park is interested in helping make it happen."

I asked the Premier straight up whether those quotes were true, whether those reports were actually true and if that's actually what the government was doing and how they felt about the sell-off of Toronto Hydro. She refused—refused—to respond to that question. She refused, actually, to deny that that was her intent. It's clear that the Premier is willing to help sell off local utilities, just like she's willing to sell off Hydro One. Well, Speaker, it's the wrong thing to do. It was the wrong thing to sell off Hydro One and it's the wrong thing for the Premier of this province to facilitate the sell-off of local distribution companies in places like Toronto and other municipalities.

We should keep control of our electricity system. We should keep that control in public hands so that our hydro system works for the people first—works for people, not for private profits. That is the critical difference between the Premier of this province and me. The Premier seems to think that our hydro system should work for the tiny few—the tiny few. She seems to think that the hydro system should work for a few private owners, that it should generate profit for investors; that it should serve those investors who focus, first and foremost, on the increase on their return on investment. That means increasing the rates that people have to pay in order for them to be able to get their increased return on investment.

That's not what the hydro system should be. That's the Premier's view: that it should be all about private investors; people with deep pockets making money off the backs of people like Kristin, Laura, Fran and Hannah. That's what the Premier's view is: to make those everyday struggling families and struggling businesses pay so that Liberal friends and the well-heeled in our province can make a few more bucks on their return on investment as they sell off more and more shares to their friends.

Honestly, it's also the view that the Conservatives share. I say that because, in all honesty, we have seen the exact same behaviour from that party. That's why the Conservatives have no answer when it comes to fixing the hydro system and getting costs down. Le Parti conservateur n'est pas la solution.

It was the Conservatives who started taking us down this path in the first place. It was the Conservatives who started privatizing our hydro system. It was the Conservatives who did tremendous damage to our public system, and rates have been going up ever since. It was the Conservatives who first started proposing the sell-off of Hydro One, and they were actually forced to back down in the face of a public outcry. We all know that Conservatives privatize public services and utilities. That's what Conservatives do. That's who they are. That's in their DNA.

New Democrats have a different point of view from those two parties, and that's what this motion is all about. This motion calls for the kind of real action, the kind of crucial change that we need to take to stop the rising cost of hydro and to stop the privatization that's driving those cost increases. The priority of our hydro system shouldn't be generating big profits for investors; that should not be the priority of our electricity system. The priority of our hydro system should be to provide affordable electricity that keeps people's bills as low as possible. That's what our electricity system was founded on over 100 years ago, and that's what it should still be doing today.

It should make sure that those prices are under control and that they're predictable and consistent from month to month so that families are not surprised, not shocked and not dissolved into tears when they look at their bills. We should be focused on conserving energy, increasing efficiency and fighting climate change. We should make sure that the hard-working families, retired seniors, northerners and people in every corner of this province are never forced to pay the price for an electricity system that is not working for them.

Les gens ont besoin d'électricité abordable. We can make that happen now.

As New Democrats, we believe that government can work for people. We can make better decisions here at Queen's Park that actually makes life easier for families, not harder. We can help lower hydro bills and give people long-term relief. We can fix the crisis in hydro. We can make life more secure for families today and help ease the worry that so many people feel.

To do that, we have to pass this motion. We have to stop the privatization of our electricity system, for the sake of Laura and Fran, paying \$677 this month in Niagara Falls—it adds insult to injury that as we sat in their kitchen, we could hear the roar of the falls behind us, while they're forced to pay \$677 for their electricity bill; for the sake of Hannah and her two sons in Hamilton, paying \$324 a month for hydro in their basement apartment, with her having to take that money out of her kids' registered education savings plan; for the sake of Kristin and her young family in Kitchener, paying three times more for hydro than they were last year; and for the sake of every Ontarian who is working incredibly hard and yet falling further and further behind in this Liberal Wynne government's Ontario.

Let's lower their hydro bills in a way that will really work over the long term. Let's pass this motion and stop the privatization of our electricity system. Let's start to reverse the damage that the Liberals and Conservatives have done to our once public—wonderfully public—electricity system.

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Let's take real action to make sure that the next generation can actually afford to live in this province and build a better future in this province. Hannah's sons and Kristin's children, and Laura and Fran's loved ones, and all of our children and grandchildren should be able to afford to live in Ontario. They should be able to live in

this great province and have every opportunity that they need to thrive. They should be able to raise their own families and build a better future right here in this province.

That's what New Democrats are working for, Speaker. That's what the public deserves. That's what people want to see their government respond to. We are working to make sure that the next generation has a real future here in Ontario.

That's why this motion is so incredibly important. I look forward to every member in this House supporting it. Thank you very much. Merci beaucoup.

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

Mr. Bob Delaney: It's my privilege to speak on behalf of the government to this opposition day motion that echoes the long-standing position of the NDP to be consistently opposed to any and every means of generating or transmitting electricity.

The opposition day motion criticizes every action taken by the government while, as usual, offering no coherent solution—

Interjections.

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

Mr. Bob Delaney: Thank you, Speaker.

The opposition day motion criticizes every action taken by the government while, as usual, offering no coherent solution whatsoever to how to power and light our cities and rural areas, how to move Ontarians and their goods, and how to assist the fast-growing and energy-efficient Ontario advanced manufacturing sector.

As Ontario's economy continues to expand and grow and as electric cars and electrified regional public transit move from the drawing board to implementation, the stability of this province's energy system is vital. That makes the province's commitment to a cost-effective, clean, robust power generation supply imperative.

During the past 10 years, Ontario's electricity system has been significantly rebuilt and dramatically reformed. By comparison with most of our neighbouring jurisdictions, Ontario has built the energy generation and transmission infrastructure of tomorrow, using yesterday's money, and financed it over its useful lifetime at interest rates of very nearly zero. The regions neighbouring us, especially in the United States, face the daunting prospect of needing to buy today's energy generation and transmission infrastructure, to use tomorrow's money and to finance it at interest rates that have nowhere to go but up.

Explaining energy pricing, green energy, nuclear refurbishment, transmission renewal and supply mix—that's not that hard. Understanding and predicting how Ontario and the rest of North America will move towards a cap-and-trade program—that's hard.

What is germane is that Ontario has sharply reduced emissions from the electricity sector through the elimination of coal-fired electricity generation and associated investments in emissions-free generation: more energy

from our remaining hydro potential, renewable energy, and ongoing refurbishment of Ontario's clean, green, reliable, sustainable and environmentally friendly Candu nuclear reactors.

As a result, Ontario is in an extremely strong position to move forward with cap-and-trade. We have already paid a price that most other jurisdictions have not even begun to estimate yet.

When it comes to electricity prices, they're driven by just four things.

One of those things is interest rates and inflation, and all over North America, that number is very low.

The second thing is the cost of fuel. Here in Ontario, the cost of fuel is very low. Sunshine, wind and falling water don't cost anything. Per unit of energy generated, uranium is very, very low. Per unit of energy generated, the cost of using natural gas for peak power is, again, very, very low in Ontario. By comparison, in states like Indiana and Ohio, the cost of fuel is very high because most of that fuel comes from burning coal.

Then you go to capital expenses. Capital expenses are the major driver of electricity prices. You're either spending money to rebuild your system or you're not. If you're not, your rates may be lower than what they have here, but they're going to be a lot higher once you start to play catch-up with Ontario. If you are in one of those jurisdictions that has been spending money on capital improvements of its electricity-generating system, then you're putting tens of billions of dollars on to the rate base of the people who buy the electricity from you.

South of the border, in some of our neighbouring states—where, by the way, the price of electricity is already higher than it is in Ontario in many cases—they have not been doing that. Here in Ontario, we have. To the left and to the right of us, to the east and to the west, we have the provinces of Quebec and Manitoba, which are not growing as fast as Ontario is and, by comparison with Ontario, have overbuilt, legacy hydroelectric capacity.

The price of power was cheaper in Quebec than Ontario when I was growing up in Quebec in the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s. It's cheaper now, and it's going to be cheaper in Quebec in the future. The same is true of Manitoba. But the fact of the matter is that people from those two provinces, on a net basis, are migrating to Ontario and not the other way around.

The elimination of coal-fired generation in Ontario represents a 30-megatonne reduction in greenhouse gas emissions since 2003. Like capital expenses, where you're either building or you're not, you either believe that climate change is real or you don't. And if you believe it's real, you are willing to do something about it or you aren't. If you don't believe it's real or you're not willing to do something about it, then you may as well change to another channel, because this debate probably isn't for you.

But if you do believe it's real and you are willing to do something about it, then you are going to be looking at the compromises to replace carbon-emitting electricity

with clean electricity. Ontario has already made those compromises. Ontario's electricity sector is now more than 90% emissions-free. Ontario's climate change strategy is going to build on this investment in people and this investment in modern infrastructure.

A key part of this clean electricity system that's so reliable—a part that Ontarians accept—is our province's 18 operating Candu nuclear reactors. On a day-to-day basis, nuclear energy supplies about 60% of the power used by Ontarians. It meets Ontario's baseload requirements with electricity that is reliable, cost-effective and greenhouse gas emission-free.

Ontario's nuclear energy sector doesn't just power the Ontario economy; it drives it, as well, generating billions of dollars in direct and secondary economic activity in Ontario communities each year. That industry itself creates jobs and growth across many other sectors across Canada. In communities across the province and across Canada, the nuclear industry covers a range of jobs across all aspects of its supply chain, supporting a workforce of approximately 60,000 high-value, scientifically minded and skilled workers with challenging and important careers.

The nuclear and Canadian renewable power industries are concentrated in Ontario, putting our province at an advantage in the market as a successful exporter of nuclear and renewable technology. Our nuclear sector supports 180 nuclear supply chain companies, generates net tax revenues, develops highly specialized technology exports and supports research and development.

Importantly, Ontario's 2013 long-term energy plan reaffirmed our province's plans to refurbish 10 nuclear units at the Darlington and Bruce nuclear stations. Those refurbishments are going to continue to boost economic activity across Ontario, create jobs, ensure savings for ratepayers and secure a clean supply of reliable and affordable electricity.

Now, Speaker, this NDP motion would keep people working in the United States or in Quebec, but not in Ontario. This government's energy policy has been about Ontario jobs and the growth and prosperity in this province that those jobs create, even as they supply reliable and sustainable electricity for the rest of the economy to depend on. Ontario's robust energy supply brings back to Ontario between a quarter and a third of a billion dollars each year through net revenues from the sale of electricity to neighbouring jurisdictions through the 26 intertie points that connect Ontario with the Great Lakes basin states and our adjacent provinces of Quebec and Manitoba. That's profit. That export revenue is value right here in Ontario.

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That predictable, diverse, clean energy surplus allows Ontario to sell 500 megawatts of electricity to Quebec when Quebec needs electricity most, which is in the depths of the winter.

Speaker, the most expensive electricity on the continent is in the US New England states. It should be noted that the states that border Quebec—states where the price

of electricity is much higher than in Ontario—not only buy electricity from Quebec but, in some cases, their electric utilities are owned and operated by Hydro-Québec. So much for the myth of inexpensive electricity if you just buy it from Quebec, which, by the way, usually does not have enough power to sell to Ontario in any rate.

Where is the province of Quebec headed in its own power plans? Well, exactly where Ontario blazed the trail in North America a dozen years ago: into renewable energy. With 63 hydroelectric generating stations, Quebec's room to expand its generating capacity through hydro dams is limited.

Hydro-Québec's own strategic plan, by the way, acknowledges that New Yorkers pay double the power rates that Ontarians pay.

Quebec's peak power needs are some 38,743 megawatts, and at Quebec's peak times some of that electricity is generated in Ontario—because in Quebec, most people heat their homes with electricity.

Ontario's industrial electricity prices are consistent with average industrial electricity prices in many US states, including Minnesota, Pennsylvania, Michigan, New Jersey and California. Clean, reliable and affordable electricity is a priority for everyone in the Great Lakes basin, and Ontario is further along in building a diverse and robust electricity system than its neighbours are.

Ontario has a suite of cost mitigation programs to work with industry to keep electricity costs competitive with other jurisdictions.

Just as a reminder, the industrial conservation initiative, more commonly known as ICI, was designed for eligible electricity customers to shift consumption to off-peak hours to save on costs. By reducing demand during peak hours, current participants can save about 25%, on average, on their electricity bills. Approximately 300 of Ontario's largest power consumers, mostly large corporations in the manufacturing business, are already participating in and benefiting from the ICI program. The expansion of ICI allows consumers in specific electricity-intensive sectors to reduce their electricity costs by reducing their demand during peak hours, thus making more electricity available for homes and small businesses during those very peak hours.

For electricity-intensive companies that are expanding production, there's the Industrial Electricity Incentive Program, which uses Ontario's healthy supply of electricity as an incentive to increase production and expansion through reduced electricity rates. The Independent Electricity System Operator has awarded 22 contracts to energy-intensive companies across the province through this program.

For the northern resource and manufacturing sector, the Northern Industrial Electricity Rate Program provides up to \$120 million per year in electricity price rebates of two cents per kilowatt hour, representing a nearly 25% reduction in electricity prices for eligible large northern industrial consumers. That translates into jobs in the north—good, high-paying, challenging careers.

The Industrial Accelerator Program assists eligible transmission-connected companies to fast-track capital investments in major energy efficiency projects, equipment retrofits, process changes and new construction.

The saveONenergy business program provides energy conservation initiatives and rebates to distribution-connected industrial consumers to help them manage their electricity use and to save money on their bills.

What we call the “smart grid” is a modern electricity system that's composed of intelligent electricity infrastructure. It uses advanced communications and control technology to improve the flexibility, the reliability and the efficiency of the electricity system. A smarter grid means system-wide benefits, including increased conservation, fewer service disruptions, far lower greenhouse gas emissions, less wasted energy, lower operating costs and more job growth. That smart grid is driving research and development, innovation, investments and efficiencies in the province's energy sector and, by extension, in every other sector in Ontario.

Since 2011, Ontario has supported the development of smart grid technology across the province and has tested those cutting-edge solutions in real world settings. These investments are driving the development of new high-skilled jobs in the smart grid and clean tech sectors and firmly placing Ontario as a global leader.

The main vehicle for supporting grid innovation is the Smart Grid Fund. This program funds projects that test, develop and bring to market the next generation of energy grid solutions to help consumers and businesses manage energy costs, to improve conservation efforts and to integrate new technologies, like electric vehicles and storage.

Leveraging that private sector investment by better than 3 to 1, Ontario's funding of the smart grid is leading to new solutions to increase reliability, flexibility and responsiveness to meet the demands of tomorrow. What that means is that Ontario now directly supports 27 smart grid projects through the Smart Grid Fund throughout the province—all projects that have been successful in keeping down the increase in the price of power. Several more projects will be added in the coming months with the latest round of funding. The Ministry of Energy continues to encourage different sectors to work together toward a stronger economy. Building a smart grid and supporting innovation is just part of the province's plan to build Ontario up.

Another such way is to improve the efficiency within the electrical system. The best two examples of this are local distribution company consolidation in Ontario; and in particular, the merger of Hydro One Brampton with PowerStream, Enersource Hydro Mississauga and Horizon Utilities Corp., along with numerous others. But of course, this motion opposes those types of efficient and cost-saving measures.

Together, the merger of these utilities with Hydro One Brampton will create the second-largest electricity distributor in Ontario. Just to put some scale on it: Hydro One has about 1.1 million customers and is the largest

electricity distributor in Ontario. It has about 24% of Ontario's market, so any suggestion that Hydro One, by any means, can make the price of electricity is nonsense. With 24%, it is simply not a market maker.

The second-largest electricity distribution company is the merger between Brampton Hydro, Enersource, Verizon, PowerStream, Horizon and a number of other companies. It has just under a million customers—some 900,000 odd.

The third-largest electricity distributor is Toronto Hydro.

Taken together, these three companies have around 80% of the share of Ontario's electricity distribution market. There are some 40 other companies that fight for the other 20%.

The merged entities deliver efficiencies and economies of scale while continuing to provide safe, reliable and affordable electricity. Now, this type of merger in the distribution business helps minimize price increases to Ontario families and businesses through efficiencies and restructuring and consolidation of electrical utilities. In California, for example, they have four distribution companies—four.

The province has been clear that it will not force the consolidation of local distribution companies, but will work to create incentives for voluntary mergers. There will be, in effect, no shotgun marriages.

The province will also not interfere with what is, in effect, a decision under municipal jurisdiction with regard to the city of Toronto and what action it wishes to take with the municipal utility that it owns. In like manner, the province didn't interfere with Enersource Hydro Mississauga when it pursued its merger with Hydro One Brampton and a number of other utilities, nor should it.

Speaker, I've heard the opposition party say that in some form or other, the privatization of Hydro One will cause power rates to rise, which is completely silly, because power rates are not only set by the Ontario Energy Board, which has a long history of turning down applications for rate increases, but, as I mentioned earlier, with 24% of the province's electricity market, Hydro One is not in a position to be a price maker even if it wanted to be.

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As well, one of the challenges that Ontario is going to face is our investment in our transit infrastructure. Some \$13.5 billion is going to be invested in regional express rail in the greater Toronto and Hamilton area to quadruple the number of trips to 6,000, an effort that not only gets cars off the road but is also going to lead to increasing electrification of our mass transit system. That power has got to come from somewhere, and Ontario's priority is that the power to generate our commerce and our transit during the day is going to be done here in Ontario.

The Eglinton Crosstown LRT is going to receive \$5.3 billion in capital investment from the province. That too is an electrified line.

Roughly \$1 billion is going to be invested in infrastructure for the Ring of Fire, which is going to involve the provision of electricity up in the north of the province.

The Hurontario light rail transit system in Mississauga and Brampton will provide 20 kilometres of new, modern, reliable rapid transit beginning in 2022, thanks in part to a nearly \$1.5-billion investment by the province of Ontario. That line will be powered by, you guessed it, electricity.

Another billion dollars will support phase 2 of Ottawa's light rail transit expansion, which will also be required to be run by electricity.

These are just a few of the projects made possible by the province's significant investment in our infrastructure here in Ontario. But it's an investment that's made possible in part by broadening the ownership of Hydro One. Why shouldn't people, through their pension plans, be eligible to buy what they already own as taxpayers of Ontario? Why shouldn't they be able to buy that? Why should their pension plans, as the Ontario Teachers' Pension Plan has had to do, have to go abroad to buy assets in other jurisdictions? Why can't they build Ontario assets?

That's why, with the privatization of Hydro One, Ontario, with 40% ownership, will by far be the largest and the controlling shareholder. No other entity will be permitted to own more than 10% of the shares. And, in fact, the shares are very broadly owned. So any notion of a number of entities—which, by the way, it would take pretty near all of them to come together to accumulate nearly 10% of the shares of the company and to outvote the province of Ontario—is not only ludicrous, but as well, the province of Ontario retains the flexibility of being able to change the entire board and, if it so chooses, to replace the president.

So the mechanism by which one could assume that a 60%-private Hydro One will be able to drive rates up that are far in excess of what the other 76% of the market will dictate, and to do so over the objections of the Ontario Energy Board, and to do so with a board of directors, a president and an executive that the province can change if it acts in a rogue fashion—these are all safeguards built into the effort to broaden the ownership in Hydro One to enable people in their RRSPs to be able to own a part of the utility, and to ensure that Ontario takes that capital and uses it for some of the things that we very desperately need in this province to keep from choking on our own traffic.

Speaker, I'm going to stop there because I know a few of my colleagues wish to weigh in on it. But if one hasn't guessed it yet, the government will not be supporting this particular opposition day motion.

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

Mr. Peter Tabuns: I'm pleased to rise in support of this resolution.

Speaker, as you're well aware, I have talked to a lot of people about the sell-off of Hydro One, and I have to tell

you, people understand what is going on. It isn't mysterious to them. A lot of people, when I'm on their doorstep talking to them about it, they say, first off, that this is just like Highway 407, which Mike Harris sold off—the same thing. There's an election coming in Ontario in two years; there was an election coming from Mike Harris in 1999. Mike Harris needed a whole bunch of cold, hard cash to make the books look good, and the Premier of this province is in the same position and makes the same decision as Mike Harris: sell off public assets so that things can look good in an election.

Let's not be confused for a moment. Is this about infrastructure? No, not for a moment—not for a moment. The Premier talks about \$160 billion worth of work needed for infrastructure. Four billion bucks? You really need to sell off the patrimony of this province, what we have developed as a heritage, what is our gift from the people who have gone before, a central part of our industrial system, for \$4 billion, when you need \$160 billion? No, Speaker.

Mr. Kormos is not here. He would use some very interesting and creative wording.

Mr. Shafiq Qadri: “Horse feathers.”

Mr. Peter Tabuns: “Bull feathers” is a good word. I enjoyed it at the time; I enjoy it now. But frankly, Speaker, this has nothing to do with anything but the re-election of the Liberals in 2018 and having the cash to say the deficit is dealt with. If you're willing to change the course of this province's history, if you're willing to undermine our ability to be prosperous for decades and generations to come to get through one election, then you don't deserve to ever be elected.

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

Mr. John Yakabuski: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I was putting my BlackBerry away and almost lost my spot.

We've heard an awful lot in the last few weeks that we've been back here, but we've been hearing about it for years, about the cost of electricity and the hardship that it is placing on families, businesses, people in communities all across this province. The leader of the third party talked about that in her submission today. She didn't really talk about all of the reasons behind it, but we're going to cover some of those today, because that is what it really comes down to.

I was at the committee on Bill 13 on Monday. We heard some more of those stories about how people are struggling to get by in Ontario, even as they've done all the conservation they can do in their own homes and on their own usage and still can't afford to pay for hydro. The Auditor General has spoken about how much more hydro costs, electricity costs, in the province of Ontario than it should cost: \$37 billion since 2006, with another \$133 billion to go in the next 17 years. She also talked about how we paid \$9.2 billion more for renewable energy than we should have because of the very, very expensive contracts that the government signed

So when the New Democrats talk about trying to help people, we do need a little bit of a history lesson here, because those very same people that have donated \$1.3 million to the Liberal Party in corporate donations are the very same private corporations that are building those renewable generation projects as a result of the Green Energy Act. So when the New Democrats supported the Green Energy Act so wholeheartedly in 2009—and they were told about what was going to happen, they were told about the costs, but they stood there in their place here in this House and supported the Green Energy Act. It is the Green Energy Act that empowered all of those private power contracts that the New Democrats speak so holier than thou about. But they empowered those contracts by supporting the Liberal government on the Green Energy Act. So you can't have it both ways when you want to speak in this House.

Then they talk about the cost of power and how we're going to generate power, and they twist themselves in knots. They could be in one part of the province at noon hour talking about how they oppose nuclear and how we shouldn't go ahead with the refurbishment, in the by-election in Scarborough, that Pickering should be shut down in 2020, not extended. And then in other parts of the province, depending on which New Democratic member is trying to save their own seat: “Oh no, we like nuclear.”

They can't seem to get their story straight on how we're going to power this province. So they love to bring out a motion that condemns the Liberals—and that's correct—but they want to make sure they condemn everybody, including the PCs but except the New Democrats. Look, they are right about a couple things in this motion. They are right—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): See? You didn't even notice me. I would suggest, if you want to raise your voice and wave your arms, at least do it to me, through me. You didn't even notice that I stood up. Not good.

1640

Mr. John Yakabuski: Speaker, with all due respect, I didn't realize it was a requirement to face you to speak. I am speaking through you—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): You'll sit down again. I'm well aware of your duties and my duties. You know full well, when you're in that position, that you are to talk through me, not wave your arms and talk to the NDP without intervening with me occasionally. You're not doing that, and I ask you to do it.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Thank you very much, Speaker. Lesson learned.

When it comes to talking about how we're going to power this province, they can't have it both ways. You can't, on the one hand, say that you're opposed to nuclear power but we're going to make sure we have all the generation we need to power Ontario. They wanted to make sure that everybody is condemned in this motion but themselves. They don't want to take responsibility for the decisions they've made in this House, supporting the

Green Energy Act, which was the worst piece of legislation.

Oh, and by the way—I'm afraid to look over here now. By the way—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): You can sit down again. I can do without the sarcasm.

Thank you. Continue.

Mr. John Yakabuski: By the way, it is also the piece of legislation that took away—that stripped away—the rights of municipalities to make decisions with regard to what kind of energy projects are built in their communities. That was also the Green Energy Act. The NDP gets up and spouts against rural residents losing their rights. They supported it in 2009, when we told them it was going to be a disaster. It altered legislation in 15 different ministries, and yet they supported it.

Today, they want everybody to believe that it's everybody else who is at fault but not them. Accept some of the blame yourselves, I say to the folks to my left. Accept some of the blame yourselves. The Liberals do deserve the blame because you're right about one thing: It was 4.3 cents a kilowatt hour when they took power. It's 18 cents a kilowatt hour at peak. Everybody in this province recognizes that that's over four times in increase since the Liberals took power. Are they responsible for those increases? Yes. Has the NDP had nothing to do with helping them along the way? Absolutely not.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Thank you so much. Further debate?

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: It's always a pleasure to rise on behalf of my constituents to bring their opinions and their voice to this chamber. I'm not sure I can follow the dramatic performance of the member who was just up, but I'll do my best.

I'd like to give a little history lesson, as the education critic for the party. Under Mike Harris and then Ernie Eves—a Conservative government—they started the privatization of hydro. That was followed by a Liberal, McGuinty, who tried to or was planning to privatize our hydro system. It was only because it was so close to an election and the people were not happy with the idea of selling off our public hydro that McGuinty decided to back down. As we've seen with the Liberals, they back down on decisions that are good for them, not necessarily good for the province—when we're looking at gas plants, for instance. They'll do anything to save a seat, whether it's a good idea or not. At least McGuinty did decide to back down on selling hydro.

Now we have Premier Wynne, who was a member of McGuinty's government, forging ahead with the sell-off of public hydro when an overwhelming majority of the people in this province don't want it to happen. Every single time—and make no mistake on that side of the room and our Conservatives to the right of us—someone in this province opens their hydro bill, they will remember that the Liberals are responsible for the fact that they cannot pay those bills. The Conservatives played a role in the fact that they cannot pay those bills, that they cannot put food on the table for their families.

The NDP is the only party that has consistently opposed the sell-off of our public hydro system. It's interesting that the Conservative member before me says that we want to lay blame everywhere else and not take responsibility for our actions when we've seen time and time again that this party has flip-flopped on so many things, including the sell-off of hydro. You could not have started the process and then stand here on your moral high ground, saying that you have no role in the fact that our hydro bills are so high, and say, "We oppose the sell-off of hydro." Going into an election, you suddenly now oppose the sell-off of our public hydro system.

It sounded to me like the Conservative member that was just up is actually opposed to the idea of clean, renewable energy, so they should come right out and say that: that they oppose clean renewable energy, rather than misleading the people of this province.

I don't have much time left, so I'd just like to point out that the Premier often stands up and tries to deflect by saying that the NDP don't support the sale of public hydro because we don't support investments into infrastructure like roads, bridges, schools and hospitals. Never has anyone on this side ever said that we oppose investments into infrastructure like roads, bridges, schools and health care. What we oppose is the only government in 100 years who feels that they need to ignore the voice of the people of Ontario and sell off a public asset that actually generates money to go back into roads, bridges, schools and health care. So I'd like to just make that clear, because we know the government side likes to say that we don't support those things, but we do.

This is a bad idea. You need to support this motion and stop the sell-off of hydro.

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

Mr. John Fraser: There's a lot of finger-wagging going on here today: "It's everybody else's fault." I'm not going to say that.

I think the history that we have here with hydro in this province is that we kept the price of hydro artificially low and did not invest. We did not invest—successive governments. I'm not going to wag fingers. We've all been there. We were all in government.

Interjection.

Mr. John Fraser: I'm pointing my finger; I'm not wagging it. I want you to know, that's the didactic finger. This is not a wag.

We all did this collectively. We had a choice. What we're talking about today here are choices. I understand the position of the party across, and I respect their position. I don't agree with it, but what I do say is that all these things are about choices. In 2003, you had a choice: Do you invest in the infrastructure? Do you close coal plants? Do you refurbish nuclear? All those things cost money. We had a stranded debt of about \$39 billion—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Due to the fact that I enforced it with the member from Renfrew, I would appreciate it if you would go through me. You

seem to be directing it right at the third party. So please talk to me.

Mr. John Fraser: Sorry. I'm just so far back here right now, Mr. Speaker. I apologize.

So those are choices that we made. The thing that's critical here is that the measures the government has taken in terms of trying to address those who are most affected by the price of hydro—people with low incomes, people who are vulnerable, people on fixed incomes—those are the important things for us to do.

We can debate whether or not we should leverage the value in an asset to get another public asset, but I firmly believe that what we've done as a government is to address those needs that existed in 2003. We've eliminated coal, which has had a great economic benefit to our province, which we don't hear being talked about on the other side of the House.

I will not be supporting this motion. I thank you very much for the time, Mr. Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate? The member from Prince Edward–Hastings.

Mr. Todd Smith: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'll try to look directly at you this afternoon.

We've done this a million times before in this House. At least 11 or 12 times we've had an opposition day motion, since I was elected back in 2011, on this very topic, or something similar. It's another day and another discussion about hydro rates here in Ontario. We had one of these discussions just last week, put forward in the name of the leader of the official opposition, Patrick Brown. At that time, we had members of the third party who were standing up—and you would have thought that the government had changed between question period that morning and the opposition day motion during the afternoon in that debate. Members of the third party got up one after another and they took solid aim at the official opposition on that day.

Now, this might shock a lot of people, Mr. Speaker, but I'm actually used to watching the third party body-block for the government when the going starts to get tough. We've seen it a couple of times.

1650

I watched it happen when they cut deals on certain bills with this government in the past. I watched it happen in 2013, when they auctioned off the trust of the people of Ontario in budget negotiations that year. I remember telling members of the third party at that time—standing here in the Legislature and saying that they had sold their votes far too cheaply. I remember certain members saying that what they had really gotten was results. I remember them standing up, one after one, and saying, “We got results from those negotiations”—that the government was really going to reduce insurance rates by 15%. Remember that? And the Financial Accountability Officer was going to be a game-changer in this Legislature. I remember members of the third party standing up and saying that that's what we were going to get.

What they really got was a big sack of magic beans. There was nothing that really changed. We certainly

haven't seen the reduction in the insurance policies, and we haven't seen the FAO making any big differences in this Legislature, because this government continues to operate behind that big black curtain. They're not sharing the documents with the Financial Accountability Officer. They're picking fights with the Auditor General. Certainly, they didn't get what they thought they were going to get. They thought they were going to get results from this.

In today's motion, the members of the third party are doing it again. They're getting up and they're body-blocking for the government. They can't help it. I don't think the Premier has ever found a better tool for keeping her party in power than the third party, Mr. Speaker.

Don't get me wrong: I'm kind of honoured, as a member of the official opposition, to be attacked in a motion put forward by the third party; I am. It means that their polling is telling them the same things that the polling is telling all of us, and that is that people would rather put their trust in the members of the official opposition to run the government than they would their own party or, certainly, the Liberal Party. That puts a big old target on our backs here in the official opposition. Not only do we have the government trying to knock us off, but we've got the third party as well, because a lot of them are scared for their own seats.

Let's examine the text of the motion. First, it blames the rate increases partly on a government that hasn't been in power for a decade and a half, even though all available evidence indicates that the price of electricity didn't actually begin to skyrocket until 2010, which means that either the policy to which the motion refers took 10 years to have any effect, or that the inquiring minds in the third party examined the available evidence and, as usual, came precisely to the wrong conclusion.

I'm not going to defend what happened back in the mid-1990s; I wasn't in the chamber at that time. But they could have voted to defeat this government a few times since I arrived here. They happily kept the government in power and allowed these disastrous policies to continue in exchange for their big bag of magic beans that hasn't resulted in any real results here in Ontario.

The final part of this motion deals with the privatization of local distribution companies and, in particular, Toronto Hydro. Do I think that privatizing Toronto Hydro is a good idea? No, I don't. Do I think that a government under five OPP investigations like this one, on its fourth fight with the province's Auditor General, and who continually refuses to disclose documents to the province's Financial Accountability Officer about major government spending items, should be moralizing about mature levels of government? No, because they've lost all moral authority to dictate terms to any level of government.

We'll have no lessons today from a party that spent much of my last five years here in this Legislature enabling this government to bring in the disastrous energy policy that we've seen. They sat on their hands in my second week here in the Legislature and voted with the

government on my bill, the Local Municipality Democracy Act, which would have given the power back to municipalities to determine whether or not these industrial wind turbines and renewable energy projects would be located in their municipalities. They voted against it.

They didn't have the courage to stand up to this government back in 2011, and they don't have the courage now.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): And I thought today was going to be dull.

Further debate?

Ms. Peggy Sattler: It is an honour for me to rise today to participate in this very important debate that we are having on the motion before us to stop any further privatization of Ontario's hydro system. Speaker, I am speaking today not only on behalf of the people I represent in London West, but also to honour the legacy of one of my predecessors from a London riding, one of the most esteemed members ever to serve in this Legislature, and that, of course, is Sir Adam Beck. He had been mayor of London, he was an MPP for the riding of London and he was the father of Ontario's publicly owned hydroelectricity system. As our motion states, his mantra was, "Power at cost," because Sir Adam Beck recognized that a publicly owned electricity system was absolutely critical to this province's economic future. He was a fierce opponent of any privatization of our electricity system because he knew that privatized utilities would not serve the public interest.

I think Sir Adam Beck would be very proud of this motion that we have brought forward today. He would be standing here with other members of the New Democratic caucus supporting this motion.

Speaker, that legacy of Sir Adam Beck has certainly carried forward within my community. In 2013, a couple of years ago, we went through a very active, lively debate about the potential privatization of our own local distribution company, London Hydro. I have to say that there were very heated opinions on both sides of the debate, but in the end Londoners soundly and overwhelmingly rejected the privatization of our local utility because we recognized the importance of keeping that in public hands. We recognized that it made no sense whatsoever to sell off a public asset that was generating \$7 million a year in revenues for city coffers, that employs more than 300 people and that actually has the public's best interests in mind.

Today in my community, we have a very active branch of the Keep Hydro Public campaign, which is the non-partisan campaign that has sprung up all across the province to halt the privatization of Hydro One. We have signs covering the riding. We have people signing petitions faster than we can print them. Speaker, Sir Adam Beck would stand strongly in support of this motion, as do I.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member for Northumberland—Quinte West.

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: Speaker, I see we have about 13 minutes left, and I'm just debating here—I'm not sure

it's legal—whether I should give my time to the two official oppositions. I'm having such great fun today listening to either side of the opposition throwing rocks at each other. This is fantastic; it's the best show I've ever seen. But you know what? I do have some stuff to talk about, so I'm not going to give up my time; I'm going to use it.

Mr. Todd Smith: Take your time.

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: I will, I will, I will.

Speaker, some of the members—and I'm not going to refer to each one in particular—talked about how energy prices were so low way back, Speaker, but then they don't want us to talk about the legacy they left behind—so far back.

Ms. Catherine Fife: Don't hurt yourself, Lou.

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: I am. Joe's going to look after me.

I would say to you that those prices were frozen and we kept on building that debt. I remember one time just before an election they sent out a cheque for 200 bucks. I gave it to charity.

Interjections.

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: They don't want us to talk about legacy, but yet they can talk legacy.

I would say to the NDP that one of the comments from one of their members was, "Well, it's only \$4 billion out of the hydro sale," but he didn't say the other part of the equation, where about \$5 billion is going to go to retire the debt. You only say what's convenient.

1700

The motion had about three or four pillars in it, but I want to focus on one. One thing has come up in question period for the last couple of weeks, I would say, and that's saying that the province has something to do with Toronto deciding to divest some portion of their hydro.

It has been very clear. It has been said over and over again that this government on this side, when it comes to those issues, whether it's amalgamating municipalities or boards or, in this case, LDCs—those decisions are made locally. The rules haven't changed. They've been in place for the last—

Ms. Andrea Horwath: You'd better do your research, Lou.

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: I am doing my research. The rules were changed about two years ago—that goes for all the LDCs—to have a discounted tax rate. That has not changed. It's the same as when it was set up a couple of years back. I do do some research, Speaker.

Back to Hydro One: They talk about, "You don't need to divest some of Hydro One for infrastructure. You're going to build it anyway." But I haven't heard from either opposition where they're going to get their money. They must have a printing press somewhere. They must have a printing machine somewhere.

With fairness, they need—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Essex: I think I've been rather lenient with his outbursts, and I would ask him to cut it back, please. Thank you.

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: Thank you, Speaker. I haven't heard what their plan is for infrastructure spending in this province.

The other part that I would say that kind of boggles my mind a bit is, we've been hearing from both sides of the opposition that when it comes to hydro rates, the NDP has been promoting for a number of years—for quite a while; a few years—that we should remove the PST on hydro bills. That was their mantra. So what did we do in the throne speech? The Premier made it very clear that that portion of the tax is going away. So today, it's a different story.

Let's move forward a bit. The official opposition, over and over again, said that they had a solution to fix hydro rates: Stop signing new green energy contracts. After the IESO gave us some good advice—that we had enough supply—the minister acted promptly, and we stopped signing any new large projects. Today, they've changed their mind. It really, really leads me to believe that when I say that the opposition don't have a plan, they don't have a plan.

I would say that we're all ears. We're trying to listen. We're trying to deal with these issues, because they are real issues.

I just want to go back and touch on infrastructure a little bit, and I want to leave some time for my colleague, Speaker.

They say, "What is the \$4 billion of the partial sale of Hydro One going to do for infrastructure?" I come from rural Ontario. I don't have subways; I don't have airports. Well, I do have one in Trenton, but it's a military airport and it's very limited for civilian use, but for emergencies it's there, and we're thankful we have it because we have a good relationship with CFB Trenton—by the way, the largest military installation in all of Canada. I'm proud it's in my riding.

Just a couple of weeks ago, the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs was in Alnwick/Haldimand, a municipality in the great riding of Northumberland—Quinte West, and he came to confirm that eight municipalities in the county of Northumberland will benefit some \$17 million over the next three years with permanent, formula-based funding—\$17 million. I don't know how much money that is—certainly I'm far from having anything close. But, Speaker, it's a lot of money, and I can tell you how appreciative those municipalities are because now they have not one-time funding but some sustainable funding year after year. It's something, frankly, that I've been advocating for since I was in municipal government to both the federal and provincial governments: that we needed some stable funding and not to come with cap in hand every time we had a project.

Speaker, I would like to hear—and hopefully, they'll tell us as they move forward, on both sides—what their plans are. I understand the role of opposition, but what are their plans? Most of all, I am really enjoying the duel between the two opposition parties. It's the best I've ever seen.

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

Mr. Rick Nicholls: It's my pleasure to rise and add to the debate of the third party's opposition day motion.

When the Liberals shut down debate on their 8% hydro rebate to replace the 10% rebate they just scrapped, I lost the opportunity to raise concerns from my constituents on this issue—so much for the Wynne Liberals listening to the concerns of Ontarians.

I'd like to take this opportunity to honour my promise to a constituent by reading his letter into the record. It goes like this:

"Dear MPP Rick Nicholls,

"How does the current government justify partial privatization of Hydro One given that even the Financial Accountability Office of Ontario has made the assessment that such a sale will be detrimental to Ontarians?"

"In the years following the sale of 60% of Hydro One, the province's budget balance would be worse than it would have been without the sale. The province's net debt would initially be reduced, but will eventually higher than it would have been without the sale." That's apparently from the Financial Accountability Office of Ontario on October 29, 2015.

My constituent then goes on to say, "I understand that the speech from the throne yesterday"—referring to September—"has made commitments to give Ontarians a 'savings' of the equivalent to 8% of the HST effective January 2017; however, we still have to get through the remainder of 2016 with high rates, and there is a rate change due in November. Given the rates for hydro over the past seven years from the Ontario Energy Board's website, that change is likely to be yet another increase in rates. Following the 'savings' we are supposed to get in January, there will likely be another increase in May" 2017. "Ratepayers and taxpayers have done our part to fund the government; how is the government going to help Ontarians?"

"Respectfully,

"Michael Verhart (Tilbury)."

Speaker, this motion might have good intentions, but it was poorly thought out. It contains some sloppy policy and historical inaccuracies. The motion blames the Liberals and the Conservatives for the increase in rates from 4.3 cents per kilowatt hour up to 18 cents per kilowatt hour. The vast majority of increases actually began in 2003 under the Liberals, after the PCs left office.

Perhaps the NDP might want to focus on the past. I'd like to note that it was the NDP that supported the Liberals' disastrous and expensive Green Energy Act, which imposed hundreds of industrial wind turbines on unwilling host communities and drove up hydro bills. That's recent history—and by the way, just for the record, there are well over 500 industrial wind turbines in the riding of Chatham—Kent—Essex.

If the NDP's wording in this motion were applied to the natural gas sector, Union Gas wouldn't have been able to consolidate smaller companies to provide the efficient and affordable service their customers value today, and it would have meant fewer good-paying jobs in my riding. Once again, the NDP are trying to take away choice from municipalities.

Hydro costs are something that have been debated here in the Legislature for many years, with each party taking their turn at pointing fingers. Over the course of many debates, members have brought up the importance of affordable hydro. I'd like to read a quote from a well-known Premier, and I want you to guess who that might be:

"I think the most important symptom which tells us about the health of Hydro is the indication by the minister and the chair of Hydro that we are going to have 44% rate increases over the next three years. That is a staggering increase. I think that is fairly obvious to anyone who examines it. Obviously over the next three years no one in this province to my knowledge is going to receive a raise that will be of that size. As a result, that kind of increase is going to have a tremendous impact throughout society."

Well, Speaker, you might be wondering who made that comment. That quote was from Dalton McGuinty back in 1991 as he debated an opposition day motion. The future Premier was quite upset about a looming 44% rate increase over three years under the NDP government. If he only knew at that time that his party would one day oversee a 45% increase, as we may have seen from May 2013 to the most recent increase in May of this year, for on-peak rates. Another rate increase is set to kick in on November 1.

1710

Speaker, I hope that I've demonstrated just how it's a bit of a waste of time for the NDP to inaccurately focus on the past and lay blame instead of focusing on the present and our province's future.

I have a quote for you, Speaker. We've heard the NDP talk about this gentleman, Sir Adam Beck. It's interesting to note, Sir Adam Beck said, "We must deliver power to such an extent that the poorest working man will have light in his home." I fully agree with that statement—Sir Adam Beck, from London.

By the way, Sir Adam Beck was mayor of London in 1902-03. Ironically, my great-grandfather, Frederick George Rumball, was mayor of London from 1900 to 1902—a little bit of history for you.

Anyway, people are, frankly, tired of politicians pointing fingers and going back in time to blame anyone but the government of the day for the messes we are in. People don't care what Ernie Eves or Mike Harris or Bob Rae or David Peterson did or did not do. They just know that their hydro bills are getting out of control. They want their government—in this case, the Wynne Liberals—to do something about it. If not, I'm sure the people of Ontario will make this government a thing of the past.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Grant Crack): Further debate? I recognize the member from Scarborough—

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti: —Southwest. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Scarborough Southwest: Just think of the Scarborough Bluffs. It's a beautiful riding and I'm very proud to represent it.

I just want to make a few points clear today. There's no real correlation between the sale of Hydro One and

electricity prices. Electricity prices are set by the Ontario Energy Board. They set the price. They are independent of this government and they make the decisions in the best interests of the people of Ontario. They're not there to make a profit, the Ontario Energy Board. They're there to decide what the price of energy is going to be. We don't decide that. The sale of Hydro One is a different issue. We've got two different things going on here: the sale of Hydro One and electricity prices. To smear them together is not the appropriate thing to do.

I just want to say a few things in my limited time here of five minutes. With regard to the sale of Hydro One, we will remain the single largest shareholder of Hydro One. The legislation requires a minimum of 40% ownership by the government, and no other shareholder or group of shareholders can own more than 10%. So we retain 40%. The 60% that's put out there can only be owned by different companies at 10% maximum. Ontario nominates 40% of the board of directors, with all major decisions requiring a two-thirds vote of the board. We basically have de facto control of Hydro and it will remain that.

People ask me, "Okay, we only have 40%. What are we getting for the 60%?" There's a lot that we are getting for the 60%. There is clearly an issue across Ontario. It's been neglected by previous governments and it's called infrastructure.

Interjection: For decades.

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti: As a colleague of mine said, for decades we haven't done the proper thing in regard to infrastructure.

So what do we do with the 60% that we're investing or that we're putting out for public offering? We're going to invest and have been investing \$13.5 billion in the GO regional express rail in the greater Toronto and Hamilton area, which will quadruple the number of weekly trips to 6,000. The Eglinton Crosstown LRT, which affects my riding—actually, it ends at Kennedy station—will receive \$5.3 billion in capital investment from the province. A billion dollars is being invested in the north, in the Ring of Fire. The Ontario Community Infrastructure Fund is being tripled, by 2018-19, to \$300 million. The Hurontario LRT in Mississauga and Brampton will provide 20 kilometres of new, modern, reliable rapid transit beginning in 2022, thanks in part to the \$1.4-billion investment by the province. Another \$1 billion will support phase 2 of Ottawa's LRT expansion, and—there's one other thing here—\$43 million is contributing to the Waterloo region transit hub in downtown Kitchener. All these things are possible because of the fact that we're broadening the ownership of Hydro and trying to generate money, which we need if we're going to provide infrastructure across Ontario.

As I said earlier, Ontario will remain the single largest shareholder of Hydro One. The legislation that's in place requires a minimum 40% ownership, with no other shareholder owning more than 10%. In addition, Ontario nominates 40% of the board of directors, with all major decisions requiring a two-thirds vote of the board. This is de facto control.

This is not really mentioned in the motion from the NDP today, and I think it's important to bring this forward. As I said earlier, electricity prices are determined by the Ontario Energy Board. The OEB does not allow distributors to simply increase profit margins. It also ensures that when companies improve their processes, the benefit is passed on to the consumer. So the change in ownership at Hydro One will have no impact on the rates of electricity.

For those not familiar with the OEB, it's a quasi-judicial body that's demonstrated time and again its commitment to putting consumers first. There have been various times they've tried to increase the price and the Ontario Energy Board has said no. For example, in 2010, Hydro One asked for a rate increase for distribution and received a 9% reduction for its capital request. There are other examples as well. So it's important to note that the Ontario Energy Board is not the Ontario government board—or controlled only by our government. It's an independent body.

I want to say one last thing—

Interjection.

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti: They wouldn't have changed the name of it.

One last thing in my time left: Our government doesn't get involved in municipal issues. Part of the discussion that came forward is the sale of Toronto Hydro. That's a municipal decision, not an Ontario decision. I just want to remind people too that when I was a city councillor, the government at that time—Mike Harris—did interfere and basically dissolve the cities of Scarborough, Etobicoke, North York, Toronto and two other areas and create, with a stroke of the pen, the new megacity of Toronto.

Ms. Soo Wong: Same with school boards.

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti: The same with school boards, my colleague reminds me.

We're not getting involved in that. To mix that up into the discussion today is wrong. The cities will decide.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Grant Crack): I recognize the member from Nipissing.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate that.

Let me be very clear right out of the gate here: We oppose the sale of Hydro One.

I want to talk about some of the myths that the government has been discussing earlier here today. In fact, the member from Scarborough Southwest just finished his eloquent presentation, where he rhymed off many multiple billions of dollars of programs. He said that “all these things are possible” from the sale of Hydro One. Speaker, the sale of Hydro One is going to generate, according to the government's own annual report, \$9 billion, of which \$5 billion is to go to pay the mortgage off of Hydro One. That leaves \$4 billion to spend.

Now, the Financial Accountability Officer has told us, of course, that they're putting it into transit and infrastructure and then taking the money that was already budgeted out to artificially lower the deficit; we've heard

that. But I don't know how he plans on paying—he rhymed off billion after billion after billion of programs that he's going to spend with this \$4 billion. So I'm not really quite sure that “all these things are possible” because of the sale of Hydro One—he called it the “broadening.”

We know that these are all talking points now from the government; they've developed a series of talking points. In one of them they say that the sale of Hydro One won't increase your hydro bill. Well, it will. I just clearly identified a moment ago that of the \$9 billion they're going to be taking out of Hydro One—which, incidentally, generated about \$700 million a year in revenue—(a) they won't have that revenue any longer, and (b) they still owe the money on the mortgage. They're taking \$4 billion away, but the mortgage is still due, so they're going to raise your hydro rate, Speaker, to pay the share of the mortgage that they took that money away from. They're being disingenuous when they tell you that it won't increase your hydro rates—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Grant Crack): I would ask the member to withdraw.

1720

Mr. Victor Fedeli: I withdraw.

Speaker, they're telling you one thing when the complete opposite is true. They are taking \$4 billion away—we owe that money.

It really is all about the talking points with the government these days. You've heard them suggest now that—according to them, your hydro bill has increased because the government inherited a hydro system in decline, and this is why your bill has gone up: They had to put in 10,000 kilometres of transmission. Well, if you look in the Auditor General's annual report—I appreciate they don't respect what the Auditor General has to say, but she did produce an annual report that told us, again, that the complete opposite is true. This has nothing to do with the transmission lines. In fact, the majority of the 10,000 kilometres of transmission lines that they put in were to go to these far-flung wind and solar farms, not to upgrade the system, which is why in her report she talks about the percentage of funds that is still needed to actually upgrade, because they did not do that.

Then she goes on to tell us the real reason your hydro bill has increased: “Most of the increase in what consumers pay for electricity has come from generation-cost increases, which ... account for about 60% of the overall cost of electricity.” She goes on to say, “Generation costs have increased by 74% over the last decade.”

Well, Speaker, what happened in the last decade? Something called the Green Energy Act, which I might add the NDP supported. Our party did not. This is exactly why your hydro bill has increased. The NDP and the Liberal government voted in favour of the Green Energy Act, and that is why your hydro bill has gone from 4.3 cents a kilowatt hour to, if you live in urban Ontario, 18.6 cents at peak times. If you live where I live, in Corbeil, Ontario, it's 22.6 cents. If you live down the street from my place on a little street called Treadlightly, my friend

Phil Konig—he's on low-density—pays 26 cents a kilowatt hour at peak rate. Phil and I are going to have breakfast next week, and I'm going to talk to him about why his hydro bill is so much higher than mine, which is so much higher than the majority of urban dwellers.

Again, Speaker, this is all because the Auditor General—again, I understand the government does not appreciate what the auditor says, but she tells us that generation costs have increased by 74% and generation costs account for 60% of the rise in your hydro bill.

One other myth that they talked about, as if all of this just magically happened—“We don't set rates; the OEB does,” and all this. The Auditor General told us this as well: They had 93 ministerial directives. That's when the staff say one thing—“we should do this”—and the government interferes and says, “Nope, we're doing it my way.” There were 93 ministerial directives. This is unprecedented. These are the reasons why 567,000 families in Ontario are in arrears on their hydro bill. This is why 60,000 families have had their hydro cut off in the last 12 months alone.

We've seen a retraction from this government now on wind and solar, where they've acknowledged—they've told us, they publicly admitted—that wind and solar caused your bill to go up, so they're suspending the remainder of the contracts. But again, I remind this Legislature that the Green Energy Act, brought to you by the Liberal government and supported by the NDP, is why your hydro bill has soared.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Grant Crack): Further debate?

Mr. Jim McDonell: It's always a privilege to rise here and speak on behalf of my residents of Stormont-Dundas-South Glengarry.

It's interesting today, the resolution from the NDP. They talk about the gifts of nature and the great system that Ontario has. It's a system that was essentially built in the last decade under a Conservative government. I go back to my earlier times, when we had the lowest cost of energy in North America. This was a system that we were very proud of and a system that benefited our manufacturing sector. Really, it was an unfair advantage to our neighbours to the south.

So we look at the first few years—eight or nine years—of Liberal government, and then the NDP government, and the system was a shambles. The Harris government came in—we talk about some of the issues that we have, but what really highlights this whole mess is my riding of Stormont-Dundas-South Glengarry.

I have two extremes in my riding. First of all, the majority of my riding is served by Hydro One. We pay the highest rates on the continent, now even more than Hawaii. The city of Cornwall and the surrounding area benefit from receiving their power from Quebec. It's the only area in Ontario that receives power from Quebec, and it is also the cheapest in the province. The boundaries are based on history, and the city of Cornwall and the surrounding area has never purchased power from Ontario. They've always been excluded from these hare-

brained schemes that we've seen over the last number of years, and they benefit from it.

In fact, South Glengarry is asking to be allowed to have the remainder of its territory added to Cornwall Electric because of the preferential treatment in power. When you look at it, the transmission lines actually pass right through our township, feeding the city of Cornwall, so it makes sense. Of course, that would start to undermine the whole system we have in Ontario, where Ottawa is asking to be broken off and the west is asking to be broken off, because everybody is realizing just what a mess this government has created.

To give you an example, running a dairy farm, drying corn—and just everyday living is making farming and running a business in Ontario more and more difficult under this government. We have competing states and provinces that have a better climate, which lowers the cost of production—and we add to the expensive regulations we have here the cost of doing business and the cost of power.

Where I live, just outside Williamstown, I am less than a kilometre away from Cornwall Electric territory. It's interesting: A friend of mine was building a house back in the early 1990s and he had a choice between Cornwall Electric and Ontario Hydro. He chose Ontario Hydro. So I went to see him and I said, “Do you know what you're doing here? Cornwall Electric is a little cheaper.” He says, “Yes, but they're not far apart and Ontario Hydro is offering a better grant for my heat pump.” So he chose them.

Fast-forward to last year, when he was trying to sell his house: He was having a hard time selling his house because of the cost of electricity. That's how much it has changed in just a short time period. We see that this is affecting not just a residential homeowner; it's affecting business. Let's not forget the main culprit behind this is the Green Energy Act, something that the NDP has supported numerous times, propping up the government, and we see the result.

They talk about the environment; let's talk about the environment. The Liberals talk about shutting down the coal plants. You have to remember who started that program. It was a Conservative PC government back in 2002-03. They talked about a realistic goal of closing the plants by 2014. Everybody remembers the Liberals said, “No, we will do it in 2007,” and they failed. Then they stood up and said, “We're going to do it by 2011,” and they failed. They made the 2014 date, which was the original date that was promised by the PC government, because they knew that was a realistic date. They didn't just have an election campaign saying, “We'll do it fast.” It was a realistic date. That's what they worked at.

We look at today, where you have the NDP talking about shutting down nuclear plants. They would like to get rid of nuclear power, but the main reason why we got rid of coal was the efficiencies attained at Bruce Power. They brought in two extra units that could never be run under the previous regime, which they had there when it was run by Ontario Hydro. It was a plan, again, started

by the PC government, and actually there was so much power, they had to build an extra transmission line, because Ontario Hydro figured, “Well, they’ll never get all the units working.” That surplus allowed them to shut down the coal plants. Actually, you could shut down all the green energy today and still have a surplus. So let’s just be honest. Those are the facts. People talk about them.

1730

So what are we sitting here for? Energy is going up from 4.3 cents a kilowatt hour. I think we just heard that in places now it’s up to 26 cents a kilowatt hour. Look at the change in power rates in the last few years. The technical experts said, “This Green Energy Act is a problem. It’s not going to work. The system won’t handle it.” We had an NDP government that supported that all along, and we see the result.

The other thing that did help close the coal plants was the energy rate spiked so high, we lost our manufacturing: 600,000 jobs are gone. Shut down the plants and they use less power. But that’s not what the people of Ontario wanted. The people of Ontario wanted good jobs, good union jobs that paid lots of money, and we’ve lost those. These jobs that were paying taxes and supporting our social system are now gone. I think that they have to take a little bit of credit for that.

I just have a little bit of time, but I’ll tell you, somebody—not in my riding, but in an adjacent riding—has a contract with this Liberal government for a solar plant. Maybe being from the country and a little sharper than the rest, he has five years to act on putting the system in place. Of course, the price of equipment has dropped. He was down recently at a Texas convention and they were talking about what rates they could accept. He told them he was getting 80 cents. It shut the conference down. Everybody stopped and, first of all, thought he was lying. He said no. They said, “Where do you get that?” He said, “I get that in Ontario.” They couldn’t believe it—80 cents a kilowatt hour. He’s buying the technology at a much lower rate because, as the member from Streetsville said, they were smart and they put the equipment in early. They put it in when it was at peak price. The prices have dropped drastically.

This is something we want: planning from this Liberal government—or from any government in Ontario—that puts the consumer first and not itself.

I know other members in my party want to speak. Thank you, Speaker.

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

M^{me} France Gélinas: En Ontario, pendant au-dessus de 100 ans, l’électricité était vendue au coût, donc on payait entre trois et quatre sous le kilowatt. Pendant 100 ans, la province de l’Ontario a été capable non seulement d’avoir de l’électricité à un prix abordable; on a été capable de construire des routes, des ponts, des écoles, des hôpitaux. On était capable de tout faire ça.

Puis, arrive Mike Harris avec son plan qu’on était pour démanteler notre système d’électricité. Donc, maintenant,

il y aurait une section pour la génération de l’électricité, une section pour le transport de l’électricité et une section pour la distribution. La première chose qu’on a faite c’est de privatiser la génération d’électricité ainsi que la distribution. Ils ont quand même mis les freins et n’ont pas privatisé la transmission.

Arrive notre première ministre, M^{me} Wynne. Elle a décidé de finir la privatisation de notre système électrique et de privatiser la transmission en vendant les « shares » de Hydro One. Qu’est-ce que ça veut dire? Ça veut dire que pendant 100 ans les Ontariens et Ontariennes ont été capables de travailler et d’avoir accès à l’électricité à un coût abordable. Depuis le début de la privatisation, de plus en plus, les comptes d’électricité en Ontario ont explosé, ce qui fait qu’en ce moment, on a plus de plaintes contre les factures d’électricité et des gens qui viennent nous demander de l’aide parce qu’ils ne viennent pas à bout de payer leur facture d’électricité et puis de demeurer dans leur maison en même temps. Ça n’a pas de bon sens.

Dans un premier temps, lorsque tout ça est arrivé, les néo-démocrates ont demandé de ne pas mettre la taxe de vente harmonisée sur l’électricité. Ça n’a pas de bon sens qu’un gouvernement provincial taxe un service essentiel. En Ontario, en 2016, de penser qu’on peut vivre sans électricité, c’est de la foutaise. Tout le monde a besoin du système électrique. Mais non, le gouvernement a décidé de mettre la taxe harmonisée sur notre facture d’électricité.

Maintenant, ils nous offrent des rabais. C’est une farce, cette affaire-là, monsieur le Président : un rabais équivalant à 8 %, ce qui est la partie de la taxe provinciale de la taxe harmonisée. Pourquoi est-ce qu’on ne fait pas la bonne chose et tout simplement ne pas taxer notre facture d’électricité? Ce serait beaucoup plus facile et beaucoup plus en ligne avec les valeurs des Ontariens et Ontariennes.

On ajoute à ça qu’une des premières choses qui est arrivée lorsque la première ministre Wynne a décidé de privatiser et de vendre des parts dans Hydro One, c’est que le président-directeur général d’Hydro One a décidé que son salaire devait être de 4 millions de dollars. Donc, juste pour une partie de notre système électrique, le président-directeur général va faire 4 millions de dollars. Si tu regardes à l’est ou à l’ouest, au Québec où il y a un système public ou au Manitoba où il y a un système public également, non seulement que le président-directeur général est en charge de la production, de la transmission et de la distribution de l’électricité, ces gens-là font moins de 400 000 \$ par année. Nous, juste pour Hydro One : 4 millions de dollars. Pourquoi? À cause de la privatisation. C’est un pas dans la mauvaise direction. Les gens sont opposés, et on devrait arrêter ça.

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

Mrs. Julia Munro: I appreciate the opportunity to add my voice to today’s opposition motion.

“Live Better Electrically.” Many of us here will remember that jingle. When you think back on it and the

kind of evidence that was provided, it looked like you should live better electrically. As a result, you had an enormous number of choices of products—stoves, refrigerators and freezers—that of course would all require electrical energy. And then the gadgets—whether it's the can opener, the hairdryer or the electric toothbrush, all of our urban-style living seemed to include its share of electrical appliances. And of course, later on, there were cellphones and computers.

But the whole idea of living better electrically came to a sudden halt. We have the kind of situation that we have today where people worry about being able to choose between eating or heating. We have, and all members in the House have, the real-life experiences and stories of their constituents who have faced the rising prices. People who live on fixed incomes have to make hard choices—and seniors.

The whole issue of time-of-use: Most of us now make sure we have our dishwasher running at night and do the laundry before it turns into the higher-priced time. This has meant that today we're looking at 60,000 families who have had their hydro cut off. That is just unconscionable in a society such as ours.

One of the economic realities of Ontario's energy prices has been the impact it has had on business as well. I know that in my riding I have a company whose chief competitor is in Ohio. Manufacturing in my riding, they're competitive with the company in Ohio, except for the cost of hydro. As a result we see that there's a struggle to attract investments. When you can't attract investments, that also reduces the job creation that is at the base of being able to create wealth. Ontario was once the engine of Canada's prosperity—the economic engine of Confederation. We all know that that is no longer the case.

1740

In the moments that I have, I want to just pick out a couple of particular examples. One that comes to mind is the Green Energy Act. One aspect of the Green Energy Act that I'm going to focus on is ruling out the opportunity for municipalities and their residents to be involved in the process of the wind turbines. As a result of not being allowed to comment or be involved in the decision-making, this Liberal government has been able to place turbines against the wishes of the municipality and its residents, and they have sprouted across the Ontario landscape.

Look at the decision to cancel the Mississauga gas plant—\$1 billion. The impact of hydro rates on Ontarians is far-reaching. Today, we know more about the impact these are having on hospitals and people who require electricity for their at-home health needs. These are the kinds of things that create the situation we are looking at today.

I want to make it clear that virtually no one has escaped the impact of these disastrous decisions. People have every right to think that their government acts in their best interests. The vast majority of Ontarians work hard, pay their taxes, raise their children and obey the

laws. In exchange, they expect the government to provide access to health care and education for their children and the safety of their communities. They want to enjoy the fruits of their labour. In today's Ontario that doesn't exist.

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

Mr. Wayne Gates: I want to talk real quickly, because I don't have a lot of time. I want to talk about Fran and Laura from Chippawa. Our leader, after hearing their story and hearing how they broke down crying in my office because of their hydro bills, came right to Chippawa and spoke to them.

Then I want to talk about Port Colborne, where they had a meeting, where they're going to raise the price of hydro at a small utility. A hundred people showed up to that meeting. They broke down crying. They were throwing their hydro bills at the VP of that organization, because that's how bad hydro has got.

I want to talk real quick because I don't forget this, but we have 6,000 people in Niagara Falls who can't pay their bills—6,000, Mr. Speaker, of 67,000 in the province of Ontario. You have seniors—and I've said this before in here—who have to choose between medication for their diabetes or their heart disease, or paying their hydro bill. You have young families who have to choose between feeding their kids or paying the hydro bill—or buying them new clothes for school. It makes absolutely no sense in this province.

On the union jobs: I cannot believe that the PC Party would stand up and talk about union jobs and manufacturing when I spent half my life in the auto sector and they said, "Let the auto sector die. Let that industry go away. Get rid of union jobs." That's what the PCs said. I was at the table when they did that, so that really bothers me when I hear that.

I want to say this quickly: I'm proud of a group called Niagara Against Hydro Rates, who have been amazing in their work to try to bring down hydro rates and oppose the sale of Hydro One.

I listened for a number of hours today about the PC Party going after the NDP. Well, let me tell you: That is a party that wanted to bring work-to-rule to Ontario. It's a party, let's not forget, that had Mike Harris, Ernie Eves, John Tory and Tim Hudak, who wanted to get of 100,000 jobs. Are you kidding me? You're going after us? You sold Highway 407. You gave it to a Spanish company and we're still paying for it.

I've got 30 seconds left, and I want to say this: I called the public utility in Niagara-on-the-Lake, in my riding, this afternoon and said to the president that back in my riding Niagara-on-the-Lake Hydro had the option to merge with private hydro companies when Harris wanted to do it. They chose not to do that. Guess what has happened. Does anybody know? Because of that, the president confirmed to me today, Niagara-on-the-Lake—listen to this—has the lowest rates in the entire region. Think about that. That's why you don't privatize hydro in the province of Ontario.

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

The leader of the third party has the remaining time to reply.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate that.

Look, there has been a lot of discussion around the room today, but there are some basic facts that the people of this province know, that are clear and that won't change at any time in the future—and that is, that the New Democratic Party is the only party that has consistently been opposed to the privatization and the sell-off of our public assets. Whether it be a highway or whether it be Hydro One, New Democrats have consistently been opposed to the sell-off of any of our public assets because they are the legacy that we should be protecting for the next generation. That's what New Democrats believe, and we have never changed.

Both of the other parties have flipped and flopped all over the place on this issue. The Liberals used to say we shouldn't be selling off our assets, and now they're doing just that. The Tories are all about selling off assets and privatization, and now all of a sudden they want Ontarians to believe that they've changed their spots, that somehow they've changed their opinion on that. It is not true, and the thing that the people of this province absolutely deserve is a party that is going to do what they say. They don't have that in the Liberals. They don't have that in the Conservatives. They certainly have it with the NDP.

The Conservative Party—all of a sudden their leader says he believes that there's a climate change problem here. A number of his members were just saying that the climate change issue is not important. They are climate change deniers over there. I hope Mr. Brown was listening to what his members were saying. We've had floods in Windsor, in Thunder Bay and in Hamilton. We've had floods in Peterborough. There's a problem that we have to deal with.

Now, New Democrats were very concerned with the way that the Liberals implemented their Green Energy Act. That's not what we voted for. We voted for the principle of dealing with climate change. We still think that there's a problem with climate change, but we didn't want to see a government privatize all of the renewable energy on the grid here in the province of Ontario.

Speaker, you have a province where the people have been led down a garden path by the government. You have an opposition party that is trying to lead people down a garden path as well. The bottom line is that New Democrats are the only party that can be trusted to

protect the public assets of this province and to be against privatization every single time.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Thank you. Ms. Horwath has moved opposition day number 2. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

I believe the nays have it.

Call in the members. This will be a 10-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1748 to 1758.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Members, take your seats. Order.

Ms. Horwath has moved opposition day number 2. All those in favour of the motion, please rise one at a time and be noted by the Clerk.

Ayes

Armstrong, Teresa J.	Gélinas, France	Sattler, Peggy
Campbell, Sarah	Gretzky, Lisa	Singh, Jagmeet
DiNovo, Cheri	Hatfield, Percy	Tabuns, Peter
Fife, Catherine	Horwath, Andrea	Taylor, Monique
Gates, Wayne	Natyshak, Taras	Vanthof, John

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): All those opposed to the motion, please rise one at a time.

Nays

Albanese, Laura	Fedeli, Victor	McGarry, Kathryn
Anderson, Granville	Flynn, Kevin Daniel	McMahon, Eleanor
Arnott, Ted	Fraser, John	Milczyn, Peter Z.
Baker, Yvan	Gravelle, Michael	Miller, Norm
Ballard, Chris	Hoggarth, Ann	Moridi, Reza
Berardinetti, Lorenzo	Hoskins, Eric	Munro, Julia
Bradley, James J.	Hunter, Mitzie	Murray, Glen R.
Chan, Michael	Jaczek, Helena	Naidoo-Harris, Indira
Chiarelli, Bob	Jones, Sylvia	Naqvi, Yasir
Colle, Mike	Kiwala, Sophie	Nicholls, Rick
Coteau, Michael	Leal, Jeff	Oraziotti, David
Crack, Grant	MacCharles, Tracy	Potts, Arthur
Damerla, Dipika	Malhi, Harinder	Qaadri, Shafiq
Del Duca, Steven	Mangat, Amrit	Rinaldi, Lou
Delaney, Bob	Martins, Cristina	Sandals, Liz
Dhillon, Vic	Martow, Gila	Sousa, Charles
Dickson, Joe	Matthews, Deborah	Thibeault, Glenn
Dong, Han	Mauro, Bill	Vernile, Daiene
Duguid, Brad	McDonnell, Jim	Wong, Soo

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 15; the nays are 57.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): I declare the motion lost.

Motion negated.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): That's the end of the proceedings. This House stands adjourned until 9 o'clock tomorrow morning.

The House adjourned at 1801.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO
ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lieutenant Governor / Lieutenante-gouverneure: Hon. / L'hon. Elizabeth Dowdeswell, OC, OOnt.

Speaker / Président: Hon. / L'hon. Dave Levac

Clerk / Greffière: Deborah Deller

Clerks-at-the-Table / Greffiers parlementaires: Todd Decker, Tonia Grannum, Trevor Day, William Short

Sergeant-at-Arms / Sergent d'armes: Dennis Clark

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Albanese, Hon. / L'hon. Laura (LIB)	York South–Weston / York-Sud–Weston	Minister of Citizenship and Immigration / Ministre des Affaires civiles et de l'Immigration
Anderson, Granville (LIB)	Durham	
Armstrong, Teresa J. (NDP)	London–Fanshawe	
Arnott, Ted (PC)	Wellington–Halton Hills	First Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Premier vice-président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée
Bailey, Robert (PC)	Sarnia–Lambton	
Baker, Yvan (LIB)	Etobicoke Centre / Etobicoke-Centre	
Ballard, Hon. / L'hon. Chris (LIB)	Newmarket–Aurora	Minister of Housing / Ministre du Logement Minister Responsible for the Poverty Reduction Strategy / Ministre responsable de la Stratégie de réduction de la pauvreté
Barrett, Toby (PC)	Haldimand–Norfolk	
Berardinetti, Lorenzo (LIB)	Scarborough Southwest / Scarborough-Sud-Ouest	
Bisson, Gilles (NDP)	Timmins–James Bay / Timmins–Baie James	
Bradley, James J. (LIB)	St. Catharines	Deputy Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint du gouvernement
Brown, Patrick (PC)	Simcoe North / Simcoe-Nord	Leader, Official Opposition / Chef de l'opposition officielle Leader, Progressive Conservative Party of Ontario / Chef du Parti progressiste-conservateur de l'Ontario
Campbell, Sarah (NDP)	Kenora–Rainy River	
Chan, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Markham–Unionville	Minister of International Trade / Ministre du Commerce International
Chiarelli, Hon. / L'hon. Bob (LIB)	Ottawa West–Nepean / Ottawa-Ouest–Nepean	Minister of Infrastructure / Ministre de l'Infrastructure
Cho, Raymond Sung Joon (PC)	Scarborough–Rouge River	
Clark, Steve (PC)	Leeds–Grenville	Deputy Leader, Official Opposition / Chef adjoint de l'opposition officielle
Coe, Lorne (PC)	Whitby–Oshawa	
Colle, Mike (LIB)	Eglinton–Lawrence	
Coteau, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Don Valley East / Don Valley-Est	Minister of Children and Youth Services / Ministre des Services à l'enfance et à la jeunesse Minister Responsible for Anti-Racism / Ministre délégué à l'Action contre le racisme
Crack, Grant (LIB)	Glengarry–Prescott–Russell	
Damerla, Hon. / L'hon. Dipika (LIB)	Mississauga East–Cooksville / Mississauga-Est–Cooksville	Minister Responsible for Seniors Affairs / Ministre déléguée aux Affaires des personnes âgées Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille Minister of Transportation / Ministre des Transports
Del Duca, Hon. / L'hon. Steven (LIB)	Vaughan	
Delaney, Bob (LIB)	Mississauga–Streetsville	
Dhillon, Vic (LIB)	Brampton West / Brampton-Ouest	
Dickson, Joe (LIB)	Ajax–Pickering	
DiNovo, Cheri (NDP)	Parkdale–High Park	
Dong, Han (LIB)	Trinity–Spadina	
Duguid, Hon. / L'hon. Brad (LIB)	Scarborough Centre / Scarborough-Centre	Minister of Economic Development and Growth / Ministre du Développement économique et de la Croissance
Fedeli, Victor (PC)	Nipissing	
Fife, Catherine (NDP)	Kitchener–Waterloo	
Flynn, Hon. / L'hon. Kevin Daniel (LIB)	Oakville	Minister of Labour / Ministre du Travail
Forster, Cindy (NDP)	Welland	
Fraser, John (LIB)	Ottawa South / Ottawa-Sud	
French, Jennifer K. (NDP)	Oshawa	
Gates, Wayne (NDP)	Niagara Falls	

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Gélinas, France (NDP) Gravelle, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Nickel Belt Thunder Bay–Superior North / Thunder Bay–Superior-Nord	Minister of Northern Development and Mines / Ministre du Développement du Nord et des Mines
Gretzky, Lisa (NDP) Hardeman, Ernie (PC) Harris, Michael (PC) Hatfield, Percy (NDP) Hillier, Randy (PC)	Windsor West / Windsor-Ouest Oxford Kitchener–Conestoga Windsor–Tecumseh Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington	
Hoggarth, Ann (LIB) Horwath, Andrea (NDP)	Barrie 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
Hunter, Hon. / L'hon. Mitzie (LIB)	Scarborough–Guildwood	Minister of Education / Ministre de l'Éducation
Jaczek, Hon. / L'hon. Helena (LIB)	Oak Ridges–Markham	Minister of Community and Social Services / Ministre des Services sociaux et communautaires
Jones, Sylvia (PC)	Dufferin–Caledon	Deputy Leader, Official Opposition / Chef adjointe de l'opposition officielle
Kiwala, Sophie (LIB)	Kingston and the Islands / Kingston et les Îles	
Kwinter, Monte (LIB) Lalonde, Hon. / L'hon. Marie-France (LIB)	York Centre / York-Centre Ottawa–Orléans	Minister of Government and Consumer Services / Ministre des Services gouvernementaux et des Services aux consommateurs Minister Responsible for Francophone Affairs / Ministre déléguée aux Affaires francophones
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 Responsible for Accessibility / Ministre responsable de l'Accessibilité Minister Responsible for Women's Issues / Ministre déléguée à la Condition féminine Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille
MacLaren, Jack (PC) MacLeod, Lisa (PC) Malhi, Harinder (LIB) Mangat, Amrit (LIB)	Carleton–Mississippi Mills Nepean–Carleton Brampton–Springdale Mississauga–Brampton South / Mississauga–Brampton-Sud	
Mantha, Michael (NDP) Martins, Cristina (LIB) Martow, Gila (PC) Matthews, Hon. / L'hon. Deborah (LIB)	Algoma–Manitoulin Davenport Thornhill London North Centre / London- Centre-Nord	Chair of Cabinet / Présidente du Conseil des ministres Deputy Premier / Vice-première ministre Minister of Advanced Education and Skills Development / Ministre de l'Enseignement supérieur et de la Formation professionnelle Minister Responsible for Digital Government / Ministre responsable du Gouvernement numérique
Mauro, Hon. / L'hon. Bill (LIB)	Thunder Bay–Atikokan	Minister of Municipal Affairs / Ministre des Affaires municipales
McDonell, Jim (PC) McGarry, Hon. / L'hon. Kathryn (LIB)	Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry Cambridge	Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry / Ministre des Richesses naturelles et des Forêts
McMahon, Hon. / L'hon. Eleanor (LIB)	Burlington	Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport / Ministre du Tourisme, de la Culture et du Sport
McMeekin, Ted (LIB)	Ancaster–Dundas–Flamborough– Westdale	
McNaughton, Monte (PC) Milczyn, Peter Z. (LIB) Miller, Norm (PC) Miller, Paul (NDP)	Lambton–Kent–Middlesex Etobicoke–Lakeshore Parry Sound–Muskoka 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

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Moridi, Hon. / L'hon. Reza (LIB)	Richmond Hill	Minister of Research, Innovation and Science / Ministre de la Recherche, de l'Innovation et des Sciences
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, Hon. / L'hon. Indira (LIB)	Halton	Associate Minister of Education (Early Years and Child Care) / Ministre associée de l'Éducation (Petite enfance et Garde d'enfants)
Naqvi, Hon. / L'hon. Yasir (LIB)	Ottawa Centre / Ottawa-Centre	Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille
Natyshak, Taras (NDP)	Essex	Attorney General / Procureur général
Nicholls, Rick (PC)	Chatham-Kent-Essex	Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire du gouvernement
Oraziotti, Hon. / L'hon. David (LIB)	Sault Ste. Marie	Second Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Deuxième vice-président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Pettapiece, Randy (PC)	Perth-Wellington	Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services / Ministre de la Sécurité communautaire et des Services correctionnels
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	President of the Treasury Board / Présidente du Conseil du Trésor
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, Mario (LIB)	York West / York-Ouest	
Singh, Jagmeet (NDP)	Bramalea-Gore-Malton	Deputy Leader, Recognized Party / Chef adjoint du gouvernement
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, Hon. / L'hon. Glenn (LIB)	Sudbury	Minister of Energy / Ministre de l'Énergie
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	Deputy Speaker / Vice-présidente
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 Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation / Ministre des Relations avec les Autochtones et de la Réconciliation
Vacant	Niagara West-Glanbrook / Niagara-Ouest-Glanbrook	
Vacant	Ottawa-Vanier	

**STANDING COMMITTEES OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
COMITÉS PERMANENTS DE L'ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE**

Standing Committee on Estimates / Comité permanent des budgets des dépenses

Chair / Présidente: Cheri DiNovo
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Monique Taylor
Bob Delaney, Cheri DiNovo
Joe Dickson, Han Dong
Michael Harris, Sophie Kiwala
Arthur Potts, 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 / Président: Peter Z. Milczyn
Yvan Baker, Toby Barrett
Han Dong, Victor Fedeli
Catherine Fife, Ann Hoggarth
Cristina Martins, Peter Z. Milczyn
Lou Rinaldi
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Eric Rennie

**Standing Committee on General Government / Comité
permanent des affaires gouvernementales**

Chair / Président: Grant Crack
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Lou Rinaldi
Yvan Baker, Mike Colle
Grant Crack, Lisa Gretzky
Ann Hoggarth, Harinder Malhi
Jim McDonell, Lou Rinaldi
Lisa M. Thompson
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Sylwia Przewdziecki

**Standing Committee on Government Agencies / Comité
permanent des organismes gouvernementaux**

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Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Daiene Vernile
James J. Bradley, Raymond Sung Joon Cho
Wayne Gates, Monte Kwinter
Amrit Mangat, Cristina Martins
Randy Pettapiece, Shafiq Qadri
Daiene Vernile
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Sylwia Przewdziecki

**Standing Committee on Justice Policy / Comité permanent de
la justice**

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Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Lorenzo Berardinetti
Lorenzo Berardinetti, Mike Colle
Bob Delaney, Randy Hillier
Michael Mantha, Arthur Potts
Shafiq Qadri, Laurie Scott
Daiene Vernile
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: Steve Clark
Granville Anderson, Robert Bailey
James J. Bradley, Steve Clark
Vic Dhillon, Sophie Kiwala
Michael Mantha, 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
John Fraser, Ernie Hardeman
Percy Hatfield, Monte Kwinter
Lisa MacLeod, Harinder Malhi
Peter Z. Milczyn, Julia Munro
Arthur Potts
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 / Président: Ted McMeekin
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Joe Dickson
Lorenzo Berardinetti, Grant Crack
Joe Dickson, Jennifer K. French
Ted McMeekin, Mario Sergio
Bill Walker, Soo Wong
Jeff Yurek
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Christopher Tyrell

**Standing Committee on Social Policy / Comité permanent de
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Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Jagmeet Singh
Granville Anderson, Lorne Coe
Vic Dhillon, John Fraser
Amrit Mangat, Gila Martow
Ted McMeekin, Jagmeet Singh
Peter Tabuns
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Katch Koch