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Mardi
25 septembre 2018

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Président : L'honorable Ted Arnott
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**LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
OF ONTARIO**

Tuesday 25 September 2018

**ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE
DE L'ONTARIO**

Mardi 25 septembre 2018

The House met at 0900.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Let us pray.
Prayers.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

**SELECT COMMITTEE ON
FINANCIAL TRANSPARENCY**

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Minister of Finance.

Hon. Victor Fedeli: Good morning, Speaker. I move that a Select Committee on Financial Transparency be appointed to consider and report to the House its observations and recommendations with respect to the report submitted by the Independent Financial Commission of Inquiry; and

That the committee investigate and report on the accounting practices, decision-making and policy objectives of the previous government or any other aspect of the report that the committee deems relevant; and

That the committee have the power to send for persons, papers and things; and

That the committee be composed of six members of the party forming the government, three members of the official opposition, and that the Chair and Vice-Chair shall be members of the party forming the government; and

That the committee be authorized to meet at the call of the Chair; and

That the committee be given priority to use the Amethyst Room for its meetings; and

That the committee shall present, or if the House is not meeting, release by depositing with the Clerk of the Assembly, its interim report by November 1, 2018, and its final report by December 13, 2018, or on a date to be determined by the committee.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Mr. Fedeli has moved government notice of motion number 7. Would the minister care to lead off the debate? I recognize the Minister of Finance.

Hon. Victor Fedeli: Thank you very much, Speaker, for the opportunity to speak to this motion. I'm splitting my time with the government House leader.

Speaker, we have a very serious situation in Ontario. A couple of things have come to light. First of all, we've seen the public accounts, which I must say came as quite a surprise to most people in Ontario, to learn two things. First, that despite the Liberals telling us there was a \$600-million surplus in their 2017-18 books, when the books were indeed closed, we learned that there was a \$3.7-billion deficit in those books. So that was the first thing that people learned.

The second was the fact that the Auditor General has approved and signed off on these books, which in itself became "unusual," in Liberal speak. This is the first time she signed the government's books with a clean slate in three years. Previously, the Liberal government had a qualified opinion, which meant there were outstanding questions unanswered by the government. Can you imagine having unanswered questions about finances? It's black or white. There are no ifs, ands or buts in accounting. Numbers add up. One plus one equals two, not minus-600 million, or in this case, 3.7 billion. We learned that, and those numbers were presented last Friday.

Following that, I was privileged and honoured to release the complete report of Ontario's Independent Financial Commission of Inquiry, which was announced by our Premier Ford back in July. Lo and behold, again, Ontario learned some very startling news that no, the Liberals—who, first of all, had claimed that they were balanced and in surplus but would run an almost-\$7-billion deficit in 2017-18—well, it turns out that deficit is actually \$15 billion. A \$15-billion deficit is where we are right now in this current fiscal year.

Now, that's not our number. This is the Liberal number. This is the number that should have been in the Liberal budget that they presented. They presented it as \$6.7 billion when, in fact, it's \$15 billion. They were afraid to be upfront with the people of Ontario and tell the people what the real number is. They chose to come up with a different number, crossed their fingers, and hoped that nobody would figure it out. Well, the commission of inquiry did indeed figure out that there's a \$15-billion deficit.

Now, some people are quick to say, "Oh, but you guys already knew that. There's nothing to see here. Move along." That, in itself, is not accurate. The fact that the Auditor General, in her pre-election report, and the Financial Accountability Officer before the election both claimed correctly, with the information they had at the time, that the deficit would not be what the Liberals said—\$6.7 billion—but indeed closer to \$12 billion. One was a little under, one was a little over, but they were within the reasonable margins of the information that the public knew at the time.

Since that time, more information has come to the surface about numbers that were not accurate in the Liberals' budget. For instance, they claimed \$1.4 billion in efficiencies, but they wouldn't know an efficiency if they stepped on it. Believe me, we're going to show what efficiencies are.

Let me give you a quick example of an efficiency. When the Liberal government put out OHIP+, it was to

give free pharmacare for everybody under the age of 25. It was going to cost hundreds of millions of dollars. Premier Ford and Minister of Health Christine Elliott stepped in and made an efficiency. What that means is that they changed the model so that if you and your family, if you have a benefits program—as everybody in this House does, for instance—your benefits program now is the first payer of the pharmacare, even for under 25. If you don't have that, well then the government kicks and takes it up.

The end result of this efficiency was that everybody under the age of 25 still has exactly the same coverage as they had—in fact, it's a little better—before the announcement as they did after the announcement. Nobody lost a job, but the government saved many, many tens of millions. In fact, it may well be closer to \$200 million that the government saved. That is an efficiency. There's no fearmongering needed for that. Everybody has exactly what they had five minutes before the announcement, nobody lost a job, and we've saved countless dollars.

0910

The Liberals had \$1.4 billion in efficiencies in the budget but had no plan for one penny of it. The commission said there wasn't even a scintilla of hope that they were going to save five cents. They didn't show that. From the time the budget was announced to the day of the election, there were no savings found; there were no ambitious programs of efficiencies. In fact, when we announced, pre-campaign, that we would be looking for efficiencies, oh, it was going to be cuts, according to them. But in their own budget—as I sat on that very chair and said day after day after day, “You in your own budget have \$1.4 billion of efficiencies,” they had no plans, ever, to implement one of those efficiencies. So that money needs to be added back now, because they never found a nickel. So that money was put back in.

They were dipping into the reserves, precariously into our future safety net, dipping into that and using that money. And of course we know all the stories, Speaker, that I used to talk about on that very chair across the aisle: how they continued to sell assets and put the one-time revenue from the sale of the OPG building or the sale of the LCBO lands into general revenue. Any business person—any family—knows that you can't rely on that money every year. You're going to run out of buildings to sell very shortly. You can sell buildings, of course, and put that money where it belongs, in the reserves, and build your reserves, but you don't put it into general revenue as they did.

So we know, Speaker, that when everybody said, “Oh, you knew that number; there's nothing to see here,” that's not the issue. We didn't know the number. The number is billions—billions—worse than the Liberals led us to believe and billions—billions—worse than even the Auditor General and the Financial Accountability Officer were able to determine at that time. In fairness to them, they had the best information at the time and came up with the best possible number at the time.

So how can everybody say, “Oh, there's nothing to see here,” when it's—when did billions, when did \$3 billion

more in debt, in deficit, become “Nothing to see here; move on”? When did we hit that point, that that money doesn't mean anything? So I'm very, very surprised and, quite frankly, disappointed, Speaker, in the detractors who say, “Oh, you know, this is old news. This is old news; nothing to see.”

Then, Speaker, it takes on an even further and more nefarious ramification. So we've got public accounts: a \$3.7-billion deficit, not \$600-million surplus. We've got the true deficit for this year: \$15 billion, not the \$6.7 billion that the Liberals had said. And then we've got words that I cannot use in the Legislature, and I understand that. But we've got a system—and I'll use some of the auditor's words in a moment here—of a very devious scheme that was developed to make sure we never knew the truth. That's the real story.

That is the purpose of the select committee: to get to the bottom, yes, about how somebody could say \$3.7 billion when it wasn't true; how somebody could say \$15 billion when it wasn't true. But the real issue is the breadth and depth that the Liberals went through to make sure we never could put this financial map backwards and put it back together to understand exactly and precisely what they did.

So again, Speaker, those would be unparliamentary words. I won't use them, but I am going to eventually read some words, some not very kind words, from the Auditor General and from the Financial Accountability Officer.

But I want to go back—I know I've spoken for 10 minutes, Speaker. I've gotten through the first paragraph of my speech; I'm still not through page 1 yet of about a 40-page speech. So we did give the commission of inquiry a broad and expansive mandate under the province's Public Inquiries Act, which remains Ontario's most powerful legislative tool to independently uncover and assess questionable practices or situations. In particular, the commission was mandated: (1) to perform a retrospective assessment of government accounting practices, and (2) to review, assess and provide an opinion on Ontario's actual budgetary position compared to the glowing picture the Liberals painted in the 2018 budget. As I said, the numbers on (2) were overblown. They never told us the facts about how bad things were, but the real issue was the accounting practices that they used to keep the true state of Ontario's finances from the people.

The Public Inquiries Act gave quite broad discretionary powers to the commission. I want to thank former Liberal Premier of British Columbia, Gordon Campbell, who chaired the commission; former federal deputy minister of finance, a long-time deputy finance minister under many governments, Michael Horgan; and Dr. Al Rosen, the founder of Rosen and Associates here in Toronto, who runs Canada's leading investigative accounting firm. He's a forensic accountant. We really appreciate their diligence, their ability to work to extremely tight timelines, and the thoroughness of their report.

Premier Ford announced that commission of inquiry back in July because, quite frankly, we had reason not to trust the budget numbers the previous Liberal government had introduced prior to the election.

Of course, as I've said many times this week already and last week, it's not uncommon in politics for a new government to call its predecessors' numbers into question. Let's face it, we all do it all the time. But it's fair for someone to ask me, "Why this time, Vic? When you stand up and say, 'Their numbers were wrong; they made up the numbers'—why should we look at this one as being any different this time around?" We see it all the time in politics: a change in government; the new guys open the books; we scream in horror at the true state of the public finances; we accuse them of being reckless, irresponsible—and the list goes on and on.

But, Speaker, let me tell you that what happened under this last government is indeed very different than any other new government taking over. You just have to look at Auditor General Bonnie Lysyk's last report on the state of the government. She reviewed the Liberals' pre-election report on finances and she concluded that the Liberals' numbers were "not a reasonable presentation of Ontario's finances...." That's quite serious to hear from an Auditor General. She followed up and told us why the numbers don't add up. She said, "The government is making up its own accounting rules." The Auditor General then went on to use words like "conceal," "bogus," "deceptive" and "unreliable." Those are quotes from the Auditor General in documents that were tabled in our Legislature. Can you imagine? These are not normal words to describe a government's accounting. "Bogus," "deceptive"—those are amazing words. And then the Auditor General issued a qualified report.

If you haven't read the auditor's comments, read them fully. I've got two pages of words like that that would shock anybody. Even one word like that should make the public nervous—but two pages of sentences like that.

The commission themselves came up with pretty much the same sentiments. They built on the Auditor General's findings, as I've said, and dug in areas that have been revealed since the auditor's report and they concluded the Liberals' approach to their policies such as reducing electricity rates was to pursue a strategy that was "costly," "convoluted," "risky, complex and ultimately opaque." We couldn't see it. We could not see what they attempted to do. Again, those are not normal words used to describe a government's accounting, and that's because this was not a normal situation.

What we are witnessing right now is without precedent in recent Canadian politics, Speaker. This has never happened, quite frankly. When taken together, the conclusions of the Auditor General and the commission of inquiry represent a scathing indictment of how Kathleen Wynne and the Liberals abused the public's trust. In particular, the Liberals pursued a reckless spree of debt-financed spending and then deliberately deployed a series of accounting tricks to hide the resulting cost from the public. That is exactly what happened. This is unprecedented in Canadian politics.

0920

The result is this crippling hidden debt, which is only now being brought forward. It puts our very future in

jeopardy. It puts the future of our children, our grandchildren and their children in jeopardy. The safety nets that we need are being used up by the Liberal government.

It began with public accounts—again, I talked about the fact that the government said that they had a \$600-million surplus and actually have a \$3.7-billion deficit. In the run-up to the election, they continued to boast of a surplus when they knew—they knew—that there wasn't a surplus. So this select committee will get to the bottom of who knew what and who did what about it. We'll learn the truth. It's so important that we learn the truth so that the techniques that the Liberals employed, the breadth and depth that they went through to conceal this, as the auditor called it, should never happen again in Ontario. It should never happen again in Canada.

The real nightmare was when we look at the money that the Liberals said they will have in a deficit this year, \$6.7 billion, when it turns out to be \$15 billion. It's time for Kathleen Wynne and the Liberals to answer for authorizing what they did. Somebody authorized all this. Somebody developed this convoluted plan. Somebody authorized it, and it's time for them to answer for what they did.

The Liberal party's accountability for this scandal didn't end on election day; it began on election day, when Premier Ford said, "People deserve answers, and we are here to ensure that the people get those answers."

Speaker, I want to talk a little bit for a moment about what I call the canary in the coal mine. It was quite some time ago when—as you know, I talk about Focus on Finance quite frequently here in the Legislature—

Hon. Todd Smith: A bestseller.

Hon. Victor Fedeli: I wish it was a bestseller, Minister.

Yes, I have written five books on the state of the finances in Ontario. In fact, I did give one to one of the finance critics across the aisle.

It was March 2017, so we're talking quite a while ago now. In my Focus on Finance issue back in March 2017, I called it the canary in the coal mine. I'm going to just read a paragraph here. I call this the "Hydro Hail Mary." This is when we first heard about the government trying to do something about the mess they got themselves into with our hydro rates, when the hydro rates had more than doubled—in fact, they had tripled. We had the highest hydro rates in North America as a result of the crippling programs that the Liberal insiders got rich on. That will come out in our inquiry, I'm hoping, although I don't know.

In March 2017 we started to muse about, "This looks pretty fishy, this hydro plan." So here's what I wrote back in March:

"One interesting side note is that the government has co-opted Ontario Power Generation into their scheme"—we got our hands on a government slide deck. "The slide deck states that OPG 'Finances/manages the GA proposal'"—that's the global adjustment proposal. We thought, "What the heck do they need OPG to be involved in the global adjustment program for? They're our utility that makes power; they run Darlington and Pickering. What on earth do we need OPG for?"

Then we mused, “Why, might you ask, is OPG involved?” “Well OPG is certainly large enough to absorb this massive financial hit”—because we were going to be talking about borrowing billions and billions of dollars—“but primarily” OPG “are two steps removed from the province.” Even though we own them, I call it two steps removed from the province. “And this liability doesn’t show up on the province’s books.” We disclosed this back in March 2017, what I thought the scheme was starting to shape up like.

“Burying this purported fix inside of OPG’s balance sheet does nothing to solve the government’s bad contracts crisis. Instead, it simply masks the consequences of the government’s Hail Mary. It’s inappropriate and risky for OPG.”

Now, I wrote that back in March 2017. The government at the time: “Oh, no, you’re wrong. It has nothing to do with that. We would never do anything like that. You’re making it up. You’re fearmongering. You’re scaring the people. You’re telling them that we’re going to be borrowing billions and hiding it over in OPG. That’s not fair. You can’t say that about us. That’s not what we’re doing.” Well, Speaker—

Hon. Todd Smith: That’s what they did.

Hon. Victor Fedeli: That’s what they did.

I then, eventually, a year ago wrote “Making Up Its Own Accounting Rules.” It was the October 2017—so, a year ago—version of Focus on Finance where we laid this whole scheme out for the people of Ontario to see. I’ll read a little bit about this, because last year at this time, both the Auditor General and the Financial Accountability Office released very alarming reports about the true state of Ontario’s finances.

It’s “important to acknowledge ... the divide” between what the independent legislative officers are saying the government is doing and what the government says the government is doing. That divide grew very, very large. In accounting, this shouldn’t be. I said that earlier. It’s black; it’s white. One plus one equals two. You don’t mess with accounting.

“[T]he Financial Accountability Office (FAO) presented a report” a year ago “concluding the government’s debt reduction commitment”—this was the scheme that they came up with—“was based on ‘unlikely assumptions.’ And the Auditor General (AG) responded to the government’s financial statements”—this is the public accounts—“by issuing a ‘qualified’ audit...,” as I said, “because, based on the evidence, the statements were”—this is the auditor’s quote—“‘significantly misstated.’”

My gosh, Speaker. This is the government’s books, and the auditor is saying they’re misstated. That’s just unbelievable, that that was going to happen. Of course, that government’s answer to all this, including in the press this morning: All they did was try to disparage the Auditor General. I read some of the former Premier’s comments today. “Oh, nothing to see here. This is old news. Everybody knew that.” Well, it will be interesting to see, if everybody did know that, then why were the numbers not put in the public accounts or in the budget? Why were

different numbers used in public accounts or in the budget?

The Premier said, oh, everybody knew that; it was an accounting issue. It’s not an accounting issue. It’s the fact that they tried to financially engineer a change in results. There was an accounting dispute between the auditor and the Liberal government. We resolved that. We accept the auditor’s numbers. But it’s not just the accounting dispute; it’s the scheme that they developed. I’m going to talk about this in a moment, because I’m going to try to lay it out. It’s very complicated. It took a tremendous amount of time and effort, and a drawing—you’ve got to see the drawing from the Auditor General. As I think I said yesterday, it looks like something out of Saturday Night Live, a cartoon drawing of where the arrows go. They’ve got arrow 1 leading to another box. Arrow 2 drops down. Arrow 3 is an angle up. It twists around with a dotted line over to “who pays what to who.” There’s another arrow that comes around and joins it up. There’s one that goes down. There’s one that goes on another angle. There’s a triangle that spits money up. There’s another box that spits money over. I mean, it’s almost virtually impossible to follow this.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): I’d remind the minister not to use a prop in the House. Also, I’d like to remind the minister, when referring to other members, to refer to the member’s riding as opposed to the former Premier’s first name or last name—just the riding.

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): It was entertaining, that use of that prop.

Hon. Victor Fedeli: Thank you very much, and I would never challenge the Speaker. That’s the Auditor General’s drawing that she sent to us. But I do apologize for using it. I know better, Speaker. But I’ve got to tell you, it’s one heck of a chart.

0930

I would encourage everybody to go on the Auditor General’s website and download the document called The Fair Hydro Plan: Concerns About Fiscal Transparency, Accountability and Value for Money. That’s the document the Auditor General created that has this most entertaining of charts in it.

Speaker, if there’s any doubt in that very document that I just spoke about, the auditor’s 53-page report that has that chart in it, the opening paragraph, written by the Auditor General, adds an exclamation point to it all. She says, “When governments pass legislation to make their own accounting rules that serve to obfuscate the impact of their financial decisions, their financial statements become unreliable.”

What she has said here is that the government passed accounting rules to change the impact of their financial decisions. They borrowed billions, put it on Ontario Power Generation’s books and said, “That’s not our money; that’s theirs.” They get the benefit of it; they get the bill for it over there off-book for the next generation.

She also said, “When organizational structures and transactions are designed to remove transparency and accountability, and unnecessarily cost Ontarians billions

of dollars, the responsibility of an Auditor General is to apprise the Legislature and the public in accordance with the Auditor General's mandate."

She told us what they were doing, they denied it, and everybody played ball—everybody. So, again, when the former Premier stands up and says, "No, everybody knew what we were doing"—well, we knew because we exposed it. But they continued to deny that's what they were doing. The former energy minister stood here day after day after day while we were questioning him and saying, "You are doing this." "No, we're not. You just don't understand accounting. No, that's not what we're doing."

So when people ask why we are doing the select committee—it is to get to the bottom of this. We need to make certain that this type of activity can never happen in Ontario again. That's why we need the select committee.

Again, Speaker, when I hear people say, "There's nothing to see here; move on"—there's a lot to see here. This is at the very core. This is the core of moral decency as well as financial respect. This is all about the government's so-called fair hydro plan, when they attempted to reduce hydro rates to make up for the fact that they tripled and quadrupled them.

Now we've learned that this will cost anywhere—this is what we revealed. I'm reading from what we revealed a year ago, in October 2017. At that time, we learned this will cost anywhere between \$45 billion and \$93 billion, depending on how much the government has to borrow over the next 29 years. We knew that going in. That was all revealed. What the Auditor General revealed a year ago is that the government created that complicated financing structure that I spoke about and illustrated, that was designed to keep the true cost of the plan off the province's books so as not to show a deficit or increased debt. That's what they were doing. That's what this is about. It isn't so much about the fact that yes, there's a \$3.7-billion deficit, not a \$600-million surplus in 2017-18—yes, the reality is we have a \$15-billion hole to climb out of thanks to the Liberal government, not the \$6.7 billion they were announcing—but primarily, it's the fact that they were keeping the cost of this plan off their books. They had the audacity to try to do that to the people of Ontario.

So this decision could also cost, according to the Auditor General, \$4 billion more in interest costs, because this off-books structure, this scheme that they developed—OPG doesn't have the same borrowing power as the province, and they knew that going in. So taking it off the books to try to keep it from the public—it's also costing \$4 billion more to do that.

In the Auditor General's words—it's important to see exactly what was written so you can determine just how serious this is from a financial perspective and a moral/ethical perspective. The Auditor General opens with, "The accounting rules being applied are ... not in accordance with Canadian [public sector accounting standards]." As an independent, non-partisan office of the Legislature, the Auditor General felt it's her "responsibility to speak out when the financial information of the

government is not, or will not be, presented fairly and transparently to both the Legislature and Ontarians."

In her "Summary of Concerns"—can you imagine an audit that has a headline called "Summary of Concerns"? Speaker, the auditor has a title that—she is so concerned. She said, "It is clear ... that the government's intention in creating the accounting/financing design to handle the costs of the electricity rate reduction was to avoid affecting its fiscal plan." The auditor has unmasked that they tried to borrow all this money, use that money to give you lower hydro rates, but give somebody else the bill so it doesn't show up on their books. Speaker, who does that? If this were listed on the stock exchange, guess who would be knocking at the door?

While the auditor was very clear that she does not question the government's policy—that's not her role and she was right to not question the policy—her concerns are that "planned accounting for the government's" making up its own accounting rules and budgets "is incorrect, and that it was known that the planned financing structure could result in significant unnecessary costs for Ontarians."

She is saying taking this scheme off-book and putting it at OPG is going to cost more money—\$4 billion more—and that it was known that this scheme was going to cost that. So the select committee will want to know who knew—who authorized—the people of Ontario to spend \$4 billion just to keep that plan a secret. That's what this select committee will get to, Speaker. It's not about the stuff that the former Premier says: "Oh, nothing to see here. Nothing to see here." Yes, there's a lot to see here. Somebody knew that they were going to spend \$4 billion to keep that from the public. Speaker, that in itself is just unbelievable.

As an end result, yes, the government reduced hydro bills, making them lower than the actual cost. But all those generators making the power still have to be paid, so the government now borrows that money—they borrow that cash every day—to pay the shortfall to those providers, to those people making the power. That money needs to be accounted for and that, indeed, is what we're doing because the Auditor General said that "the government did not properly account for" that debt and it's "not planning to account for" the debt.

They knew what they were doing. They knew it was costing billions more, and yet they were saying, "Nothing to see here and, oh, by the way, no, no, no, it's just a dispute with the auditor. There's nothing to see." Well, the Auditor General said that "the government is making up its own accounting rules." No wonder, Speaker. It's easy to be able to do this when you make the rules up as you go along.

The select committee will get to the bottom of this. They'll get to the bottom and we know that they'll work hard to determine exactly what happened, and they will begin to unravel the details, Speaker.

0940

In the few minutes that I have left I just want to say that in the 2017-18 public accounts we do accept the commission's recommendation to adopt the Auditor General's

accounting treatment of these issues where the former Premier says, “Nothing to see. It’s just a little accounting dispute.” Well, that little accounting dispute has turned out to be quite a pickle for the government with this Fair Hydro Trust, a wholly owned corporation that they set up on the books of Ontario Power Generation. The trust was used to provide an indirect subsidy to consumers. It was passed through the Independent Electricity System Operator, through what they called this “global adjustment refinancing”—this is when the chart starts to get all the arrows and the triangles and the upside-downs.

Somebody is going to have to get through that scheme because it was designed to hide billions and billions of dollars of deficits. That’s the sole purpose of this. All the money that was collected and all the rates that were subsidized through this trust are completely kept off the province’s books.

I said this in my speech at the Economic Club on Friday. I said to the crowd, and there were 500 people in the crowd, “Many of you in the room work for publicly traded companies.” So I asked a hypothetical question: If the CEO or CFO of their company—of the 500 people in the audience—directed one of their subsidiaries to borrow massive amounts of money—billions—to finance the parent company’s spending and then turned around and directed that same company, that same subsidiary, to hide the resulting liability off the parent’s books, what would or should happen to that CEO or CFO? I simply said, “They’d be in a lot of trouble.” We can let our minds wander, but that is exactly what happened with the so-called fair hydro plan; and the only reason the Liberals were never punished for breaking the rules is because they were the ones making the rules. That is not good enough.

Speaker, it’s not just about the numbers; it’s about transparency and trust. It’s not just about the markets; it’s about our citizens as well, because the people believe their government. If their government will not tell them the truth about one thing, then they will have to believe that their government is not telling them the truth about everything. That puts public confidence in our democracy at risk, and we cannot allow that situation to fester any longer. Only when the government of Ontario truly accounts to the people of Ontario can we begin to put the province back on a path to balance, a path to fiscal sustainability.

So we are quick to accept the commission of inquiry’s recommendations in good faith, along with the Auditor General and our Financial Accountability Officer, but while we accept those we also know that more needs to be done, and that is why we have the motion to form this select committee that will, once and for all, get to the bottom of this scandal, determine who knew what and when, and why they would ever allow \$4 billion more in taxpayer money to be spent just—just—to keep the truth from ever being known. We need answers. The people of Ontario demand answers and our select committee will get those answers.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): The minister did say he was sharing his time with the government House leader. Government House leader.

Hon. Todd Smith: Thank you, Speaker, and good morning to you.

I want to thank the Minister of Finance for his remarks this morning. He always does an outstanding job at laying out the entire story for all of us to understand, not just in his Focus on Finance novels that he puts out, which are very well researched and written, but also on the floor of the Legislature when he has the opportunity, quite often during hour-long leads. He was our finance critic in the official opposition for a long time, and did a great job at holding the government to account and shining a spotlight on exactly what the Liberal government of the day was doing here in Ontario to try and hide numbers from the public. He did a very, very excellent job of exposing those numbers, and I believe that’s why we saw the Liberal government reduced to non-party status in the Legislature. It was in part because of the work that Mr. Fedeli did as our finance critic over the last number of years.

A scathing indictment—we’ve heard all kinds of colourful language, not coming from the Minister of Finance, but in reports that were done by our Auditor General here in the Legislature on the way that the Liberals were showing their numbers. They really did abuse the public trust, Mr. Speaker; there’s no question about it.

The member was talking about March 2017. I remember it very, very well because I was the energy critic at the time. I was the energy critic for three years leading up to the election and keeping an eye on what was happening in the energy sector and shining a light on the fact that our electricity prices were skyrocketing faster than any jurisdiction in North America. We had some of the highest electricity prices in North America, and that was putting a lot of pressure on the Liberal government to do something about it.

In March 2017, they decided that they were going to do something about it. The Minister of Finance just detailed in great depth what they did to try and take the electricity issue off the table for the election the next spring in June 2018. What they did was an elaborate borrowing scheme, and they hid those numbers from the public.

Now, one thing that the Minister of Finance didn’t talk about during his presentation is the fact that one of the key reasons that a light was shone on this issue was because of a cabinet document that was leaked to my office, as the energy critic, detailing what the cost was actually going to be to the people of Ontario for this borrowing scheme—this undercover scheme—that the Liberals had concocted to try and take electricity off the table for the voters of Ontario.

First of all, how did that turn out for the Liberals? I think it turned out the way that we wanted it to turn out: The Liberals were decimated in the election, Mr. Speaker. What has been left? Seven Liberal seats, but worse than that, potentially \$45 billion to \$93 billion in debt over the next 30 years just so that the Liberal government could try and win an election. That’s how damaging that decision was not just for the Liberals—they paid a price electorally—but for the people of Ontario who potentially could

be paying tens of billions of dollars because of this scheme that they concocted.

Now I'm going to talk a little bit more about why we need to have this select committee of the Legislature—and I'm going to do to that in a moment. There have been various other Legislatures across the country and around the world that have conducted special or select committees to review their internal affairs—and I will get to some of those, but I want to speak to something that I think underscores why this whole process is necessary. When the results of the commission were made public last Friday by the minister, we had a pretty extraordinary response that I think a few members opposite may now regret. I'm speaking of the current leader of the Liberals in the Legislature and the member from Scarborough–Guildwood, who in their releases on Friday accused the government and the Premier of “pretending to be shocked by something he has known for a long time.” Certainly we've respected the numbers that were put out there by the Auditor General and the Financial Accountability Office, but the numbers are even worse, Speaker, than what they said they were going to be.

The member from Scarborough–Guildwood was the Associate Minister of Finance, the Minister of Advanced Education and the Minister of Education during the last Parliament. Other independent Liberals include a former Minister of Community Safety and Corrections, a former Minister of Northern Development and Mines, a former Minister of Natural Resources and a former Minister of Community and Social Services, not to mention one of them was the Premier, Speaker. Every one of them while they were in cabinet would have seen documents from Treasury Board that outlined the state of the province's finances. Every one of them would have done that. I now have the opportunity to sit in that executive council, and we see those numbers. Every one of them, while they were in cabinet, would have had to sign off on their ministry's initiatives to be included in the budget and the fall economic statement. They also would have been briefed on their own ministry's public accounts.

0950

All this is to say that the only implication you can draw from the statement issued last Friday by members opposite is that they never thought that they were going to be held accountable. Now, certainly, as we've already detailed, they have been held accountable by the public in the election. But they need to be accountable to the Legislature.

For three years, I sat as a member of Her Majesty's opposition and watched as the government of the day waged what could be called a guerilla campaign against the Auditor General from the floor of this very House. It was very disappointing to watch that happen. They hired outside consultants at a cost of hundreds of thousands of dollars or more for the express purpose of undermining the auditor's findings. And yet members opposite have the gall to tell the House that we already knew what they were doing. I couldn't believe the reaction yesterday from the leader of the official opposition, almost trying to continue to shove this or sweep this under the carpet.

There needs to be a light shone on this, and that's why we're bringing forward this select committee. We didn't know the full extent of what was going on, but there is a way to find out, and that is through this select committee process. From a procedural standpoint, I can stand and speak to this as the House leader. I think it's necessary to lay out the case for why this is the appropriate avenue for the government to use, to seek a remedy for the state of the province's books and the state that they were left in.

I'd like to start by quoting the Auditor General. “For the first time in the last three years, I have issued a clean audit opinion on the province's consolidated financial statements.” For the first time in three years, the Auditor General, the independent officer of the Legislature, has been able to very honestly say that she believes there is a clean audit for the province. Three years. It's unbelievable that she was unable to do that, that for three years this province didn't have an accurate set of financial records on which to make economic projections or issue bonds. That's how serious this is.

This House saw documents that were tabled here for review by the members and by the Standing Committee on Public Accounts that the auditor has given us cause to doubt with regard to their accuracy for three long years. For members to suggest that the House or an independent officer of the Legislature can be insulted by a government that way and not immediately seek to examine what happened, to me, is an insult to this House and all of us who serve here.

I'd like to quote Speaker Carr from May 18, 2000, in a ruling. “In considering the question, I find the very fact that an officer of this House, a person selected by this Parliament and sworn to faithfully discharge her duties to this House, has taken the extraordinary step of advising us that the authority of her office was disregarded and discounted to the extent that she was, and again I quote from her report, ‘unable to conduct a full and complete investigation,’ is in and of itself a challenge to the supremacy of this House, from which she draws that authority.

“In official business dealings with an officer of this House, individuals owe an obligation of accountability to Parliament. That our own officer advises that the opposite was the case is sufficient cause in my mind to find that a prima facie case of contempt of Parliament has been made out. How could it be otherwise? The privacy commissioner's sole loyalty is to this House, manifest in her trusted discharge of the role and functions assigned to her, by us, in this act.”

I submit to the Speaker that this House has no other option but to strike this select committee. Members opposite who have served as House officers will know that timeliness keeps this issue from being addressed as a breach of the House's privileges, though it arguably should have been raised at the time. That having been said, it should be left to the House to police its own affair, and that's what this motion seeks to do. It gives us the power, as members, to address what may be offenses against the work done in this place.

I now turn to one of my new friends and one of the newest colleagues in the Legislature, the member from

Guelph. He's the leader of the Green Party, and I hope he'll forgive me for disclosing this information to the House, but the member sent me a very impassioned email last night expressing his concern with this motion that we've brought forward to strike this committee. He was worried that it was too backward-looking and not enough about steps that could be taken to correct issues that have come up. He's a very thoughtful member, Mr. Speaker, and I enjoy our conversations that we have. But I say to the member from Guelph, this House enjoys the right and discipline for any transgressions that have been taken against it. Committees are the appropriate place for investigations to take place and they can do both backward-looking and forward-looking work.

We're only now at the beginning of debate on this motion, and we can't prejudge the work of any committee struck by this House to examine any question. Committees that examine issues, especially controversial ones, have a long and important history in the Westminster tradition. I'd like to highlight an example, if I could, Mr. Speaker—and this is why we're forging ahead with this committee on the government side, with the assistance hopefully of the official opposition—that is, the committee that looked at the expenses scandal in the United Kingdom a few years ago.

As members may be aware, there was considerable concern raised both by the press and the Speaker in the UK regarding the expenses of certain members and whether they abused their allowances and essentially feathered their own nests with taxpayer dollars. The matter was referred to the Members Estimate Committee. The committee then commissioned Sir Thomas Legg to help look into the issue, and the terms of reference for the examination were as follows:

“To conduct an independent review of all claims made by members of Parliament (except those who have since died) for the Additional Costs Allowance during the financial years 2004-05 to 2007-08;

“To examine all payments made on such claims, against the rules and standards in force at the time, and identify any which should not have been made, and any claims which otherwise call for comment;

“To allow members who received such payments or made such claims a fair opportunity to make representations about them;

“Subject to any such representations, to recommend where necessary any repayments which members should make and otherwise to comment as seems appropriate; and

“To report as soon as possible to the Members Estimate Committee.”

This was done back in the early 2000s in the United Kingdom: to strike up this committee to look into this scandal that occurred there. It's worth noting that, in this case, members not only made explanations to the inquiry but they also made appeals to the Committee on Standards and Privileges at the House of Commons. This demonstrates the functions of our committees that we have very seldom used in this House, which is their examination and oversight function of matters that occur in the House,

including the tabling of documents that later evidence casts doubt upon. While it is a look back, it can also be a look ahead to improve the way that the Legislature functions.

At risk of boring the members—and I worry that I may have already done that, Mr. Speaker—when we talk about the rules of this Legislature and how it functions, I'll avoid quoting all of those great books that the Clerks of the Legislature have memorized. We have the right to examine our own internal affairs here, the breaches or contempts when they occur or should they occur and the ability to discipline our own members.

I also had the privilege, like some other members of the House—although we have quite a turnover now; we have a lot of new members in the Legislature, given the results of the last election. But I had the opportunity to view our committees perform this function when the justice committee looked into the gas plants a few years ago. You'll recall, in 2011, we ended up with a minority Parliament here in Ontario—very similar to what happened in my home province of New Brunswick last night, where it's going to be very, very interesting politics over the next couple of months to see how that turns out. Congratulations to the new Premier—or at least we believe it's the new Premier-designate—Blaine Higgs in New Brunswick, the PC leader who was elected Premier, at least for the time being, we believe. It is a minority Parliament obviously, as it was here in 2011.

A minority Parliament was able to work very, very effectively in the justice committee to shine a light on the gas plants scandal during those days. It was must-see TV, Mr. Speaker, for not just members of the Legislature and our local Queen's Park media gallery, but for the people of Ontario as well. A political decision was made during the 2011 election, as you'll recall, to cancel gas plants in Oakville and Mississauga. What happened during those committee hearings down in the Amethyst Room resulted, I believe, in the early retirement of a Premier and the resignation of some cabinet ministers. People were held accountable for the decisions that were made.

1000

That committee, like the expenses scandal in the United Kingdom, did end up leading to new standards and practices for the House. We're now required to do records retention in a way that we weren't prior to 2014. You know as well as anybody else that the Premier of the day's chief of staff was found guilty in a court of law and served time behind bars for his involvement in that scandal.

As the minister responsible for the Archives of Ontario now, I think that it's a good thing. I'm also informed that the archives don't have a shortage of space, Mr. Speaker.

Laughter.

Hon. Todd Smith: I'm glad you got that.

For those rookie members like my friend the member from Guelph, I wish to assure them that these committees, generally, almost always lead to new practices in the Legislature so that it functions better, so that there are checks and balances in place, either those adopted by the government through legislation or by the officers of the

Legislature through recommendations regarding their scope and jurisdiction. These committees always fundamentally change the business of the House, and that's because when an event occurs—like, say, a three-year period of time, Speaker, where the province's Auditor General refuses to sign off on the province's consolidated financial statements—the House doesn't just seek discipline by striking a committee; it also seeks the reform of its own practices, and that's how it's supposed to be done. That's why we're striking this committee.

I commend the work that's been done so far by the Minister of Finance first of all ordering the independent commission of inquiry to take that backwards look and ensure that we know what the actual numbers are in the province that we're dealing with. It was pretty obvious, I think, to most onlookers that when the Auditor General and the Financial Accountability Officer come out saying that you can't believe the government's numbers, and I think it was pretty clear with the results of the June 7 election that most people believed the Auditor General's numbers. Why wouldn't they? Why wouldn't they? There are no politics at play when you're talking with the independent officers of the Legislature. They're here to serve the members of this House and serve the public, and ensure that people out there are getting the real facts.

But you had a government that was intent—intent, Mr. Speaker—on “making up its own ... rules.” Those are the words of the Auditor General. We had a government that was, in her words—in the words of Bonnie Lysyk, the Auditor General—“concealing” information, making “bogus” statements to the people of Ontario, using “deceptive” tactics to hide the numbers and putting forward numbers that were “unreliable.” The Minister of Finance in his speech was talking about the fact that if this happened in the private sector, in publicly traded companies, oh, my goodness—we have seen these types of things occur and we know how they play out.

Now, it's a little bit different in here, Mr. Speaker, because ultimately the people have the say, and the people spoke loud and clear on June 7 of this year: They could no longer trust Premier Wynne. They could no longer, after 15 long years, trust the Liberal government. They couldn't do it anymore. But we need to ensure—and we will do this. Through this select committee of the Legislature, we will ensure that this type of activity isn't allowed to occur in the future. As I say, it's a backward look, but we can have some very forward-looking results. Those would be accountability and trust in this place again. That's what we, as the new PC government, hope to find as a result of this select committee.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Further debate? I recognize the government—or the House leader for the official opposition.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I wish I was the government House leader. The agenda around here would be a little bit different.

Hon. Todd Smith: Boy, that would be scary.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Not as scary as you guys.

I just want to say a couple of things. I've only got about 10 minutes this morning and the rest of my presentation

will be later on today, but I will be moving a couple of amendments. I would like to send over a copy of the amendments, if I can have a page here, please. If I can have this sent over to the government House leader, please.

I want to explain the amendments before I read them into the record. I'm going to do this the other way around. I'll read from the government's second paragraph:

“That the committee investigate and report on the accounting practices, decision-making and policy objectives of the previous government or any other aspect of the report that the committee deems relevant....”

Well, I agree that the previous government—we need to look into this. I don't think this is a bad thing, in the sense that transparency is always a good thing. But you also have to look at what's going on now and what this government is doing. I think to limit this committee's ability to only look at what happened in the past and not to look at what's happening now limits what this committee can do. So I would be moving a motion in that particular direction.

The other thing is, the way that this particular motion is written, you're limiting, to a certain degree—the way that the wording is done—who gets to call the witnesses. At this particular point, there's going to be a Chair plus five members of the committee on the government side and three members of the opposition. As you know, in other select committees in the past—for example, the select committee on mental health and others—we've always made it that the members individually can call a witness forward. If you're on the committee as an individual member from either the government side or the opposition side, and there's a certain witness that you want to be hearing from, you don't want to be in a position where the government majority limits the ability to call witnesses before the committee. So we're going to be amending that particular section as well.

I have a copy here for the Clerks, but I'll move it into the record at this point. I move that the motion be amended as follows:

In the second paragraph, insert the words “and the current government to date” following the word “government”; and

In the third paragraph, insert the words “and each member of the committee shall be authorized to independently call witnesses before the committee” following the word “things.”

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Mr. Bisson has moved that the motion be amended as follows:

In the second paragraph, insert the words “and the current government to date” following the word “government”; and

In the third paragraph, insert the words “and each member of the committee shall be authorized to independently call witnesses before the committee” following the word “things.”

And now we're going to debate the amendment?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Yes, debate the amendment and the main motion. Because of the way we've amended this, we're still on the main motion as well.

A couple of things: I've only got a couple of minutes before the House breaks this morning, but I want to give the government the rationale of why we're moving these particular amendments. If the government is going to create a select committee in order to take a look at those things that, quite frankly, were troubling—and we agree with you. In the last Parliament, both in the 2017 budget and the 2018 budget, the auditor came to conclusions similar to what you're coming to now: that the reported amount of money being shown on the books was different than what it actually was, because they were using accounting practices that probably they shouldn't have been using. We'll get into that a little bit later on this afternoon.

What we're saying by way of these two particular amendments is that if we're going to look at this, we can't look at it just in the context of what happened in the previous Parliament. We also have to look at what's happening now, because transparency—I agree with the government House leader when he says that there's nothing more cleansing than shining the light and making sure that the public is able to see what it is that has happened, and what is that's happening. So we're moving forward with these particular amendments in the spirit of trying to co-operate with the government to make sure that the committee has the mandate to do what it's got to do.

1010

The second part, and I spoke to it very quickly, is the power to be able to call witnesses. Now, we all know by way of standing order and by way of precedence in this House and others that one of the main powers that you have as a committee is to call a witness, get papers or things before the committee. That is something that's in your motion that's in our standing orders already, but I can understand why you put it there. But what we don't want to do is to get into a situation where the government uses its majority as a way of being able to then control who it is that's coming before the committee. There may very well be some people that the official opposition wants to call that will help shed light on what the Liberals did. And we agree with you: The Liberal government both under Mr. McGuinty and under Mrs. Wynne did use accounting practices that were suspect. That's not me saying that, Mr. Speaker; that was the auditor of Ontario saying that.

In fact, the former finance critic for the Conservatives, now the current Minister of Finance, time after time after time would get up in the House and he would rail against those accounting practices here in the House. I've got a number of quotes. I've got to say, I've got very efficient staff for finding me these quotes in such short order.

Just on April 11, 2018, Mr. Fedeli is quoted as saying: "The Auditor General pointed out three areas where the budget does not include costs that should be listed. While I covered those many, many times in the Legislature, it's safe to say that they will add billions in debt."

That's what my leader, Andrea Horwath, was referring to yesterday. This is not a big surprise. For the government to come out yesterday with the report—or on Friday, I guess it was—and to say, "This was a big surprise. We

didn't know all these things," is a little bit of a stretch. We all knew those things. We knew them because the auditor and the Financial Accountability Officer had reported on those things to the House as a result of inquiries the public accounts committee made and also that individual members in our caucus made to the Financial Accountability Officer. They came back and said so in the previous Parliament. So it's not a surprise.

Now, does that mean to say we're in disagreement with the government about shining light into this whole matter? No, that's not our argument. Our argument: Don't pretend that you're surprised. You went out and spent about a million dollars hiring a former Liberal Prime Minister of British Columbia to come and tell you three things. The three things that he reported back on—that, surprise, surprise, the auditor was in disagreement with the reporting methods of the government. You didn't need to spend a million bucks to get there; the auditor had said that herself. And that the numbers stated were different: Well, again, the Minister of Finance, when he was critic in this House as the official opposition finance critic, was saying that himself. So we spent a million dollars to essentially repeat what everybody was saying in the previous Parliament. I just wonder to what degree this government is no different, in some ways, than the previous government. I understand that at times you've got to use people from the outside in order to assist. That's why we have political staff, that's why we have a professional bureaucracy to help us, and at times we need to go outside of that to get certain specialties. But in this particular case, we spent a lot of money to find out what we already knew.

New Democrats are moving these amendments forward, Mr. Speaker, as a way of making sure that this committee is fully transparent. We agree that committees are a good place to do this type of work, because committees have the time. We have the expertise on committee to be able to look into these matters in some detail. We agree that utilizing committees in this fashion is not a bad idea. But we need to make sure that the scope of the committee doesn't, first of all, give the government complete control on what's going to happen when it comes to witnesses, because I think that would be a shame, and I hope the government supports us on our amendment; also, that the scope of the committee be widened out a little bit in order to allow the committee to take a look at current practices as well, because we need to inform ourselves.

As we all know, there's going to be a budget coming this spring. There's going to be an interim supply motion later on this winter. We need to inform ourselves as a House, because we're the ones that appropriate dollars. The Legislature is all about the appropriation of the government's budget. The government can't spend money unless the House agrees. And so to properly inform members of the House, I think we need to look not only at what happened in the past, but we also need to look at what's going on now.

Mr. Speaker, you're kind of looking at me, being about that time of the clock, so I will let you adjourn the debate at this point and I'll continue later on.

Debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Thank you. I didn't want to interrupt. I thought you would bring it to a natural close and then you'd be moving on from there, but if that's your choice, then it is that time of the clock, almost 10:15, and the House will stand in recess until question period at 10:30.

The House recessed from 1015 to 1030.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Ms. Rima Berns-McGown: I would like to welcome to the House this morning the family of our page Alexander Tracey: his mom, Susan; his dad, Tom; and his brother, James. Thanks so much for coming. Welcome to Queen's Park.

L'hon. Caroline Mulroney: J'ai l'honneur en ce jour des Franco-Ontariens et Franco-Ontariennes d'introduire aujourd'hui des gens de l'Assemblée de la francophonie de l'Ontario. Ici avec nous, nous avons Carol Jolin, président de l'AFO; le directeur général, Peter Hominuk; ainsi que Bryan Michaud, Stewart Kiff et Danielle Roy. Je leur souhaite la bienvenue à Queen's Park.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: I have a friend, Gérard Malo, who is with us today from Windsor–Tecumseh with the francophonie de l'Ontario. Welcome back to Queen's Park, Gérard.

Hon. Todd Smith: I'd like to acknowledge some guests here today at Queen's Park, including a constituent from Prince Edward County, from the craft wineries of Ontario: Len Pennachetti, Paul Speck, Stephen Gash, Walter Schmoranz, Allan Schmidt, Richard Linley, Terrance Oakey and, from beautiful Sandbanks Winery in Prince Edward County, Catherine Langlois. We wish you well today as you promote VQA wines in Ontario.

Miss Monique Taylor: It's always a pleasure, as you know, as members, when we have pages from our ridings here in the House today. My page from Hamilton Mountain, Aaliyah Kinney, is our page captain today. She is joined by her mother today, who is in the gallery: Karima Habibali. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. Rick Nicholls: I see our government House leader may have taken a little bit of my thunder, but I would like to again welcome, from the Wine Council of Ontario, delegates who are with us this morning: Len Pennachetti, Caroline Granger, Paul Speck, Stephen Gash, Walter Schmoranz, Allan Schmidt, Catherine Langlois, Richard Linley and Terrance Oakey. Welcome.

M. Gilles Bisson: Monsieur le Président, je ne vais pas vous donner tous les noms de nos visiteurs de la communauté francophone, parce qu'ils sont plusieurs, mais j'aimerais souhaiter la bienvenue, de la part de toute l'Assemblée, à nos amis et nos collègues francophones ici aujourd'hui pour la journée francophone.

Ms. Lindsey Park: I'd like to welcome the Ontario Association of Landscape Architects, who are here in the east members' gallery this morning, including President Jane Welsh, executive director Aina Budrevics and registrar Ingrid Little. As well, I'd like to give a special

welcome to the delegation all the way from Washington, DC, representing the Council of Landscape Architectural Registration Boards. Welcome to President Christine Anderson, President-elect Phil Meyer, CEO Joel Albizo, director of strategy Veronica Meadows and member engagement manager Missy Sutton. Thanks for joining us this morning.

Ms. Doly Begum: I'm very happy to introduce my uncle. I think I was influenced by the member from Timiskaming–Cochrane yesterday, so I brought my uncle as well, from Northern Ireland, Ahad Meah; and my constituency assistant, Aysha Sonna. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mrs. Amy Fee: I'd like to welcome to the House today Scott McNab, who was a great volunteer on my campaign team.

Ms. Jill Dunlop: I would like to introduce two of my guests this morning who are here discussing the horse groom apprenticeship program. We have Mr. Brian Tropea, the general manager for the Ontario Harness Horse Association; as well as Gayle Ecker from the University of Guelph, sister of former member Janet Ecker.

Mr. David Piccini: I'd like to welcome to the gallery today my executive assistant, Ralph Kerr. I don't know what I'd do without him. Welcome to Queen's Park.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I wish to introduce some special guests. We have with us today in the Speaker's gallery 10 interns from the Ontario Legislature Internship Programme. Please join me in welcoming Munisha Basiram; Linda Bui; Nishani Chankar; Janessa Duran; Jad El Tal; Braelyn Guppy; Hudson Manning; Clara Pasioka; Nikki Romano; and Peter Supierz-Szczyglowski.

The Ontario legislative interns will spend the next 10 months working with members, and we are excited to have them here in the assembly. I urge eligible members to participate in this exceptional program.

Once again, welcome to the Ontario Legislature.

REPORT, ENVIRONMENTAL COMMISSIONER

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I beg to inform the House that the following document was tabled: the 2018 greenhouse gas progress report from the Environmental Commissioner of Ontario.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I also beg to inform the House that, pursuant to standing order 98(c), a change has been made to the order of precedence on the ballot list for private members' public business such that Mr. Bailey assumes ballot item number 22 and Ms. Kusendova assumes ballot item number 26.

SUBSTITUTION IN QUESTION PERIOD

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I recognize the member for Orléans on a point of order.

Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde: I would like to ask the House for their indulgence in allowing a unanimous consent. Unfortunately, my colleague Michael Gravelle from Thunder Bay–Superior North is unable to attend and ask his question. I would ask the House to allow me to ask the questions today on his behalf.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The member for Orléans is seeking the unanimous consent of the House to ask a question today in the place of her colleague, who couldn't be here. Agreed? Agreed.

ORAL QUESTIONS

PROVINCIAL DEFICIT

Ms. Sara Singh: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and good morning. My question is to the Premier.

Quite rightly, yesterday, the Premier sang the praises of the Auditor General for her due diligence and persistence in reviewing the province's books. Yet the Ministry of Finance says they're only adopting the auditor's findings on a "provisional basis."

Which is it, Premier? Is the auditor right or is she wrong?

Hon. Doug Ford: Through you, Mr. Speaker: I want to thank the member from Brampton Centre for such a lob ball question. That was very nice.

What we're focused on is the \$15-billion deficit that the Liberals created—and the NDP propped them up, supported them 97% of the time. We're going to have tough decisions over the next couple of years to get our province back on track, to make sure that every single person is prosperous and has an opportunity for growth. That's what we're going to focus on for the next few years.

We look forward to the NDP's support. As they supported the Liberals building up the \$15-billion deficit—we would love their ideas and their support. We're willing to work with them to reduce that \$15 billion.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary?

Ms. Sara Singh: Yesterday the Premier said, "I believe ... what the Auditor General was saying." But when we look at the fine print in Gordon Campbell's report, we see the Premier may believe it or he may believe the opposite; it's provisional.

As the Premier noted yesterday, the Auditor General's views are not new. There has been endless analysis and expert study. What is it that the Premier doesn't understand about the positions taken in the analysis and the positions that they're getting now from the department of finance?

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Hon. Doug Ford: Through you, Mr. Speaker: Unlike the Liberals, we respect the Auditor General. We respect working with the Auditor General. For the first time in recent memory, everyone's numbers line up. The commission's numbers line up. The Auditor General's numbers line up. The finance minister's numbers line up. The Treasury Board numbers line up.

Again, I'm asking for the support of the NDP to start being responsible. We are willing to work with the NDP to find efficiencies to put money back into the taxpayer's pocket, to make sure we create good-paying jobs and make Ontario the engine of Canada once again.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Final supplementary.

Ms. Sara Singh: Mr. Speaker, it looks like we're seeing a pattern here. The Premier is surprised by a deficit that no one else finds surprising. He agrees wholeheartedly with the auditor, but only provisionally. Then he reserves the right to lower the deficit using the same methods that the Liberals used. When will we know whether the government will actually agree with the auditor? Before the new select committee? Before the fall update or before the budget? Perhaps before the end of their term?

Hon. Doug Ford: Mr. Speaker, you know something, I just find it so ironic and so rich coming from the NDP, who stood side by side, shoulder to shoulder and propped up the Liberals. Similar to the leader of the NDP yesterday saying, "This is not a surprise"—my question to the NDP is, what were you doing for the last four years to speak out against this reckless spending?

ANTI-RACISM ACTIVITIES

Mr. John Vanthof: My question is to the Premier. Yesterday, the Premier was asked if he would stand up in this House and denounce the extreme views of Faith Goldy, a candidate for mayor of Toronto and neo-Nazi sympathizer, whom the Premier posed for photos with over the weekend. The Premier refused two opportunities to condemn Ms. Goldy's views yesterday, so I'll ask again: Will the Premier unequivocally denounce Faith Goldy and apologize for appearing in a photo that is now being used as a de facto endorsement of her campaign by the Premier of our province?

Hon. Doug Ford: Through you, Mr. Speaker: What a shame. I totally denounce—I repeat, denounce, denounce, denounce—anyone who wants to talk hate speech. You know what I find ironic? I didn't hear the Leader of the Opposition during the election denounce her members, but, you know something, we denounce it. We have zero tolerance—zero tolerance—for any hate speech. We won't put up with it, and I denounce it; I denounce it; I denounce it. I don't know how much clearer I can be about that.

The opposition wants to play politics. They want to change the channel. They want to change the channel on the \$15-billion deficit and how they propped up the Liberals, wasted billions of dollars and voted with them 97% of the time. They don't want to be held accountable, but guess what? You aren't walking away scot-free; I'll tell you that.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Stop the clock.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Order. Start the clock. Supplementary?

Mr. John Vanthof: This shouldn't be that hard. This is the woman who appeared on a white supremacist podcast and said she "salutes" the neo-Nazi hosts for showing up "in hordes" to a rally in Charlottesville, North Carolina. That would be the same Unite the Right rally where a white supremacist drove his car into the crowd, murdering one woman and injuring 19 others.

I will ask again, Speaker: Will the Premier unequivocally denounce Faith Goldy and apologize for appearing in a photo that is now being used as a de facto endorsement of her campaign by the Premier of this province?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Premier.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Opposition benches come to order.

Hon. Doug Ford: Through you, Mr. Speaker, I don't know how much clearer I can be here. I denounced every single comment from anyone, including your party during the election—which was disgusting. I find it pretty rich that they're throwing stones in a glass house—boulders in a glass house—that some of the members who are over there—absolutely disgusting comments.

I denounce all hate speech. It's zero tolerance. I think it's disgusting, anyone who wants to talk that way.

I know you have three questions. Just keep 'em coming.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Final supplementary.

Mr. John Vanthof: Premier, people are looking to you for leadership. I know that things get heated in this place and we like to score points, but people need to hear from your mouth that you do not endorse Faith Goldy. You need to say her name, Premier, that you do not endorse her and that you denounce her neo-Nazi sympathies. Premier, can you do that?

Hon. Doug Ford: After saying it five times, Mr. Speaker—they want to play politics. They want to change the channel; they want to keep this going. I'll tell you what's not going to change the channel: the \$15-billion deficit. The \$15 billion that they squandered. They turned their backs as the Liberals were out of control—the worst political corruption I've ever seen in my life, and the NDP stood by them. They stood by them while they were making backroom deals and stood by them while they were wasting the taxpayers' money without any concern whatsoever. That is terrible. That is disrespectful to the taxpayers, and we won't tolerate that whatsoever.

GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Families are hearing a lot of talk about doing things differently at Queen's Park—

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Your question is to whom?

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Oh, pardon me. To the Premier. Question period, thank you; I'm looking for an answer. I'm looking for an answer, I guess.

First the Premier claimed to be shocked by a deficit that wasn't surprising to anyone. Then he said he agreed with the auditor for now but reserved the right to disagree with

her later. Now they're striking a committee to look into the province's financial decision-making, but only if it involves the last government.

If the government is truly interested in transparency, will the new select committee be able to look into decisions since the election, since this government has been elected, as well as before them?

Hon. Doug Ford: President of the Treasury Board.

Hon. Peter Bethlenfalvy: Thank you to the member opposite for the question. We've worked really hard to restore trust and accountability to government finances and put an end to more than a decade of Liberal mismanagement. We first started to hear how sobering the situation is through the commission of inquiry, through our public accounts and through our now-released line-by-line audit. But what we have heard—it's from the Auditor General and from the Financial Accountability Officer—is that there were things done that this government has to hold people accountable for. Not my words, Speaker, but the auditor's and the third party's. They have said that we need to get answers, and we are going to move forward to get those answers through the select committee that the Premier has launched and with the full support of this government.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary?

Ms. Sandy Shaw: To the Premier again: Here's what families are afraid of: The premier is setting the stage for deep and painful cuts to our schools, to our hospitals and the services that we all rely on, and he's going to complain that the deficit made him do it.

If the Premier is really interested in transparency, he would be interested in getting all of the facts, not just the facts that help his party. Why should families believe the Premier when he refuses to do that?

Hon. Peter Bethlenfalvy: Again, we promised to restore accountability and transparency to government finances and put an end to more than a decade of Liberal mismanagement, propped up by the opposition.

I'm pleased to announce that the line-by-line audit today was completed on time and on budget and is public.

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The truth is, Mr. Speaker, that the Liberals left the people of Ontario with a legacy of debt that has put at risk the prosperity of future generations. The line-by-line revealed that total expenditures have grown over 50% since 2003. Growth in expenditures has outstripped the growth in population. Mr. Speaker, I stand here today to tell this House that fiscal mismanagement and obfuscation are things of the past and that today is a new day for Ontario.

CHILDREN'S MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

Ms. Goldie Ghamari: My question is for the Minister of Children, Community and Social Services. According to an Institute for Clinical Evaluative Sciences report, suicide rates in northern Ontario were six times higher than the provincial average, whereas southern Ontario was comparable to the provincial average. Furthermore,

suicide rates in Canada are five to seven times higher for First Nations youth than for non-Indigenous youth.

Today, the Chief Coroner of Ontario's expert panel report on residential housing deaths was released. The safety and security of children is of the utmost importance to us all. Could the minister tell this House what steps are being taken to ensure incidents like this are never repeated?

Hon. Lisa MacLeod: I want to thank the member from Carleton for her advocacy on suicide prevention and for her compassion here today.

I'd like to thank the Office of the Chief Coroner of Ontario and the expert panel for putting out this report and the recommendations. The experiences of the children outlined in this report are heartbreaking. The death of a child, particularly in care, is unacceptable. My heart goes out to the families, the loved ones and communities affected by these tragedies.

The deaths are unacceptable, and I'm going to take immediate action. We need to do more to make sure that children are safe and cared for. If a child dies, someone is responsible. We must improve coordination among service providers, as well as throughout our ministries. I'm currently engaging with the Ontario Child Advocate, the coroner, Indigenous community leaders, as well as the LGBTQ leaders.

From the CASs to group homes to my ministry, we all bear some responsibility, and I want to assure the House that, as the new minister, the buck stops with me and I will take action.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary?

Ms. Goldie Ghamari: Through you, Mr. Speaker: Thank you, Minister. I understand that mental health services available to children in care are often limited or ineffective.

Through you, Mr. Speaker: Can the minister please clarify what steps are being taken to give our most vulnerable more support when they need it the most?

Hon. Lisa MacLeod: The experiences of the young people described in this report were very difficult for me to read, and it was a very difficult briefing from the coroner last week.

Our government will take action to bring systemic changes to the residential services system. Together with partners from the child welfare sector, Indigenous communities, LGBTQ2S partners and the Ministers of Health, Education and Indigenous Affairs, we will take a collective approach to help residential placements and coordination between government agencies.

Let me be perfectly clear: I'm going to take immediate action to put in place better screening protocols for youth who are at risk and who need help; I'll issue a directive to the Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services, CASs and group homes to put the child first. It's not about checklists; it's about taking responsibility for a child's well-being. We're going to continue to improve inspections to lay out clear lines of responsibility and ensure supports are in place. Finally, we'll support youth and their workers to access mental health services and resources when and where they are needed.

But let me be perfectly clear: This government for the people will put children in care first.

LONG-TERM CARE

M^{me} France Gélinas: Merci, monsieur le Président. Ma question est pour la ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée.

The Minister of Finance told all Ontarians that we will have to make sacrifices, but we have seniors living in long-term-care homes whose safety may be at risk because of chronic underfunding. Does the minister believe that the frail, elderly people living in our long-term-care homes should be making sacrifices?

Hon. Christine Elliott: I thank the member opposite for the question. Of course, we value the contributions that have been made by our seniors. We know that they deserve to live out their lives in peace and comfort, and with the best possible care.

We know that there is an inquiry ongoing with respect to what has happened in some long-term-care homes with Ms. Wettlaufer. We are awaiting the final report. I know that the families gave some testimony in the last few days that was heart-wrenching and tragic. We know that there are going to be recommendations forthcoming. We await those recommendations, and we'll take them very seriously when they come forward.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary?

M^{me} France Gélinas: The Conservative Party seems to have copied some of the NDP's commitments: promising to end hallway medicine, promising to add thousands of long-term-care beds. But to date, all we've seen is a wait-and-see. That means sweeping the problems that we have in our long-term-care homes under the rug.

The tragedy being uncovered by the Wettlaufer inquiry shows that we cannot continue to ignore what's going on. We need to expand the Wettlaufer inquiry to examine the systemic issues in our long-term-care homes.

Will the government commit today to expanding the Wettlaufer inquiry, so that everybody understands the challenges in our long-term-care system, before taking any more services that our frail, elderly long-term-care residents need?

Hon. Christine Elliott: The Wettlaufer inquiry is well under way and in fact is nearing the end of its hearings. There is more work that they are going to have to do to come forward with their recommendations.

But that doesn't mean that we aren't doing anything in the Ministry of Health. Of course we are. We're looking at the situation. First of all, it was one of our campaign promises that we were going to increase the number of long-term-care beds, because we know there are over 30,000 people right now waiting for spaces. We are actively working on creating 15,000 beds in the first five years. That is something that I deal with almost on a daily basis in the Ministry of Health.

But there are other issues that we have to consider, too, such as the staffing in those long-term-care homes. We know that there is a shortage of personal support workers

right now. A lot of personal support workers are being asked to do jobs that they weren't initially trained for.

So we're looking at what the issues are there and trying to fix them, to make sure that when those beds are opened, there will be people who are able to work there as well.

SERVICES EN FRANÇAIS

M^{me} Natalia Kusendova: Ma question s'adresse à la procureure générale et ministre déléguée aux Affaires francophones. Aujourd'hui, le 25 septembre, tous les francophones et francophiles partout en Ontario célèbrent le Jour des Franco-Ontariens et des Franco-Ontariennes. Nous avons commencé aujourd'hui avec le déjeuner annuel de l'Assemblée de la francophonie de l'Ontario et avec la levée du drapeau ici même à Queen's Park en présence de la communauté francophone et des élèves représentant les deux conseils scolaires francophones.

En cette journée spéciale, je me demandais si la ministre pourrait nous parler de ce que notre gouvernement a l'intention de faire pour améliorer l'accès aux services en français en Ontario?

L'hon. Caroline Mulroney: J'aimerais remercier ma collègue de Mississauga-Centre de sa question en français en ce jour où nous célébrons notre communauté francophone de l'Ontario et sa riche histoire.

Nous allons déployer tous les efforts nécessaires pour bien cibler nos actions et pour améliorer l'accès aux services en français en Ontario. Je travaille étroitement avec mes collègues au cabinet du ministre pour améliorer les services en français, notamment dans les domaines de la santé, de l'éducation, des services en enfance et en immigration, pour soutenir les 1,5 million de personnes dans cette province qui parlent français. Les services aux aînés et les services en santé mentale sont parmi nos priorités.

À la suite du projet pilote au palais de justice d'Ottawa, qui assure des services en français, nous allons étudier aussi comment reproduire ce projet pilote dans d'autres palais de justice à travers l'Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary?

M^{me} Natalia Kusendova: Monsieur le Président, par votre entremise, je remercie l'honorable ministre pour sa réponse.

La francophonie est en plein essor en Ontario, et le nombre de francophones dans ma région de Mississauga continue de connaître une croissance marquée. J'ai été ravie d'accueillir des membres de l'Assemblée de la francophonie de l'Ontario à mon bureau hier, et je les remercie pour une présentation très informative.

Alors que nous célébrons la semaine francophone en Ontario, est-ce que l'honorable ministre pourrait faire part à la Chambre de ce qu'elle va faire pour appuyer la francophonie en Ontario?

1100

L'hon. Caroline Mulroney: Notre gouvernement souhaite réduire le fardeau administratif et en même temps améliorer l'accès aux services en français en Ontario. C'est pourquoi nous mènerons une tournée pour consulter

avec les entrepreneurs francophones et les entreprises qui font affaire en français. Ensemble, nous allons identifier les lacunes et les obstacles qui nuisent aux entreprises et qui freinent la création d'emplois pour les francophones. L'Ontario a un potentiel énorme et inexploité, et nous allons développer des stratégies pour miser sur notre main-d'oeuvre bilingue.

Du côté de l'immigration francophone, il est clair que les politiques du passé n'ont pas fonctionné. Nous allons trouver des solutions.

Finalement, nous allons étudier comment nous pouvons moderniser la Loi sur les services en français de sorte qu'elle reflète la réalité et les besoins d'aujourd'hui. Nous allons également revoir le mécanisme de désignation, afin de rendre le processus plus efficace.

Monsieur le Président, nous sommes à l'aube d'un nouveau jour en Ontario, un jour prospère pour la communauté francophone.

EDUCATION FUNDING

Ms. Marit Stiles: My question is for the Minister of Education. Ontario's parents and students are already struggling with the consequences of decades of cuts and underfunding to our education system under both Liberal and Conservative governments. With the government setting the stage for even deeper cuts, they are right to be concerned.

Will the Minister of Education tell us exactly what sacrifices—using the government's own words—parents, students and educators will be asked to make next?

Hon. Lisa M. Thompson: You know, I think it's really rich, the narrative that this party across the way is trying to create, because we campaigned on a mandate that we've been successful in pursuing, and that is doing everything we can to support our front lines. That includes our teachers in the classroom, that includes our education assistants and that includes our students and parents.

We are absolutely committed to respecting parents and delivering on our promise to ensure that our students are on the best course to success. The narrative that this party opposite is trying to create just needs to stop.

People through the weeks have been defining the acronym NDP in many different ways. Well, today I would like to suggest, that it's "new democratic propaganda." It just needs to stop.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Stop the clock. Order.

Start the clock. Supplementary?

Ms. Marit Stiles: Mr. Speaker, we will not stop. We will not stop—I can guarantee you that—because you are setting the table for deep cuts to our education system, and everybody knows that.

While children wear winter coats in class because the heat doesn't work and wait months and years for special education and mental health supports, this government can only offer one solution—and we know what's coming: more cuts.

Will the Minister of Education be up front with parents and let them know exactly what cuts they can expect? Will it be school closures? Will it be firing teachers or educational assistants, or cuts to supports for special needs students?

We will not stop asking these questions. People deserve to know. Educators deserve to know. Parents deserve to know. Students deserve to know.

Hon. Lisa M. Thompson: What I suggested was that the propaganda stop, not the questions. The reality is the New Democratic Party, the opposition party here, is trying to scare people into believing the sky is falling.

For instance, the GGRF, the funds that were earmarked to replace light bulbs and to renew schools: The fact of the matter is that money was already out. Out of the \$100 million through the GGRF, \$95.4 million was already subscribed to. And they were trying to describe the sky as falling.

This propaganda needs to stop. We're fulfilling our obligation to provide the best learning environment possible for teachers and students, and respecting our parents every step of the way.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Stop the clock. Order.

Start the clock. Next question.

LA FRANCOPHONIE

M^{me} Marie-France Lalonde: Ma question est pour la ministre déléguée aux Affaires francophones. Nous avons mentionné qu'aujourd'hui marque la journée des Francos et les fêtes des Franco-Ontariens et des Franco-Ontariennes. Je sais que dans plusieurs communautés, tout comme dans celle que je représente, Orléans, les organismes francophones profitent de cette journée pour célébrer en grand nombre leur francophonie. Je remercie l'AFO et tous les organismes qui se sont rassemblés ce matin pour la levée traditionnelle du drapeau et pour le fameux déjeuner, « French-ment bon ! »

Par contre, souvent il y a des organismes qui font face à de sérieuses restrictions financières. Considérant l'importance des petits et grands organismes francophones à travers l'Ontario de marquer et de célébrer leur francophonie localement, est-ce que la ministre s'engage à poursuivre le Programme d'appui à la francophonie ontarienne, le PAFO, pour justement permettre de mettre en place des activités et des événements qui rassemblent notre francophonie à travers notre belle province?

L'hon. Caroline Mulroney: Je remercie l'honorable membre pour sa question. En ce jour d'importance pour les Franco-Ontariennes et les Franco-Ontariens, je suis très contente d'annoncer que notre gouvernement est déterminé à appuyer les Franco-Ontariennes et les Franco-Ontariens de toute manière.

C'est très important, premièrement, que les francophones et les francophiles aient accès aux services en français. C'est la priorité pour notre gouvernement et c'est pour ça que je m'engage à travailler avec mes

collègues du cabinet, les ministres en santé, en éducation, en immigration—tous mes collègues—pour nous assurer que nous sommes en mesure d'améliorer l'accès aux services en français pour les francophones et les francophiles en Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary.

M^{me} Marie-France Lalonde: Malheureusement, on n'a pas complètement répondu à la question—mais je suis fière quand même que l'on s'engage à soutenir la francophonie de votre côté.

Écoutez, nous connaissons l'importance et la force que représente la francophonie—vous l'avez mentionné, madame la Ministre—partout en province, et ça ne s'arrête pas ici. Beaucoup d'avancées ont été faites dans les dernières années en ce qui concerne la représentation et le soutien des communautés francophones.

C'est pourquoi j'aimerais savoir aujourd'hui la position de la ministre déléguée aux Affaires francophones sur la membriété de l'Ontario au sein de l'Organisation internationale de la Francophonie, l'OIF. Est-ce que la ministre peut nous dire si elle va soutenir et maintenir cette membriété?

L'hon. Caroline Mulroney: La priorité de notre gouvernement est d'appuyer les Franco-Ontariens et les Franco-Ontariennes ici en Ontario. Notre membriété au sein de l'OIF est quelque chose de très important—nous y sommes membre observateur. Pour l'instant, en vue des résultats qu'ont annoncés le ministre des Finances et le président du Conseil du Trésor, notre gouvernement va se pencher sur les enjeux importants ici en Ontario pour les francophones et les francophiles.

Pour ce qui est de l'OIF, notre gouvernement est représenté par le gouvernement fédéral, comme il l'est à Washington, donc nous allons appuyer le gouvernement fédéral pour nous représenter en Arménie. Nous avons beaucoup de travail à faire ici en Ontario pour appuyer les Franco-Ontariens et les Franco-Ontariennes, et c'est ce que je m'engage à faire.

GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY

Mr. Kaled Rasheed: Mr. Speaker, our government promised the people of Ontario that we would restore trust and accountability to government. Under the previous Liberal government, spending spiralled out of control as they mismanaged the public finances, made up their own accounting rules and created non-transparent accounting schemes. In fact, it was because of the hard work and decisive action of this government that a clean audit opinion to the public accounts was given for the first time in three years. That was one part of the promise kept. Promises made, promises kept.

1110

Another promise that this government made was to conduct a line-by-line audit of public sector spending. Can the President of the Treasury Board please update this House as to the status of the line-by-line audit?

Hon. Peter Bethlenfalvy: Thank you for the question. Mr. Speaker, we promised to restore trust and accountability and transparency to government finances and to put an end to more than a decade of Liberal mismanagement. As I said earlier, I'm pleased to announce today that the high-quality, line-by-line audit was completed on budget and on time and is now public. Promise made, promise kept.

The truth is, Mr. Speaker, that the Liberals left the people of Ontario with a legacy of debt that has put at risk the prosperity of current and future generations. This is the sobering truth. We need to restore trust and accountability, which includes transparency—that's why we made the documents public—and we are moving forward with a line-by-line plan where we are going to modernize and transform government.

Mr. Speaker, I stand here to tell you that this House is going to move forward, that the things of the past are out, and help is on its way.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary?

Mr. Kaleed Rasheed: I'd like to thank the President of the Treasury Board for this answer, as my question was directed to him earlier.

Mr. Speaker, under the Liberals, Ontario accumulated the highest subnational debt of any jurisdiction in the world, at \$338 billion.

Interjections: Ohhh.

Mr. Kaleed Rasheed: Ohhh. On the current path, our shared prosperity is not assured. Action must be taken.

Mr. Speaker, can the President of the Treasury Board please inform this House how the line-by-line audit will help us transform government into a modern institution that serves the people and, by so doing, create a more sustainable Ontario for this and future generations?

Hon. Peter Bethlenfalvy: I thank the member from Mississauga East–Cooksville for that very moving question. Mr. Speaker—

Interjection.

Hon. Peter Bethlenfalvy: I'm glad to hear the member opposite, from the opposition, agree that we can agree on one thing, which is that the debt, at \$338 billion, is unsustainable, so thank you for supporting us on that.

Mr. Speaker, the intent of the audit was to provide advice that Ontario needs to end a culture of waste and mismanagement and provide the government with a way forward. The line-by-line review will help us change government for the better and change it for the people, who, by the way, submitted more than 26,000 ideas. I'm still sure that a couple came in from the other side.

We're going to modernize this government through four ways: through modernizing services; secondly, through finding more cost-efficient ways of administering government; three, by ensuring that government funding is directed to those who need it most; and, finally, by maximizing the value of government assets.

Mr. Speaker—

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Thank you. Next question.

COMMUNITY SAFETY SÉCURITÉ COMMUNAUTAIRE

Mr. Kevin Yarde: My question is to the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services. Sadly, Mr. Speaker, yesterday marked Toronto's 80th homicide, which now mirrors 2005's year of the gun. What this underscores is the urgent need for this government to address gun violence in Toronto. This government needs to invest in the root causes of violence so that we can all enjoy freedom from the fear of crime and violence.

My question, Mr. Speaker: Will this government commit to making community safety a priority?

Hon. Michael Tibollo: Thank you for that question. Our government is taking action to help combat guns and gang violence, restore public confidence and ensure that our streets and communities are safe. Mr. Speaker, during the election campaign, we promised to restore the \$12 million in funding that the previous government cut from the fight against guns and gangs. Additionally, we committed \$25 million—a promise that was made, a promise that was kept. In fact, our government doubled its commitment.

This investment is vital as a first step in combatting violence, disrupting gang activity and cracking down on the trafficking of illegal guns in this province. Unlike members from the official opposition, who have continually insulted our police services, we are standing behind them and are going to provide the tools to them to be able to do their jobs effectively—

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Kevin Yarde: Just to let you know, we stand behind the police, and we definitely will not insult the police.

Speaker, in light of the line-by-line audit, we know that cuts are looming with this government, especially as we still don't know how the \$47 million promised to support the Black Youth Action Plan has gone. Cuts to much-needed community services and programs in communities will only make matters worse. Report after report revealed that the key to addressing gun violence is better community supports.

Monsieur le Président, est-ce que le gouvernement va écouter les communautés et ce qu'elles demandent depuis des années et ne pas couper ces programmes essentiels?

Hon. Michael A. Tibollo: Mr. Speaker, once again, our commitment is to ensure that the police have the tools to be able to do their jobs. In addition to that, in fact, the ministry of community services has invested half a million dollars in Ottawa to assist with racialized communities.

In addition to that, we are working on a total-government approach to look into the issues that underlie gangs and gun violence. We discussed this before in the House, and we are working together with the Ministry of Health, with the Attorney General, with the Minister of Housing and with the minister of youth and community services to provide a solution that reaches out into all aspects of the community.

We all know on this side that the right thing to do is to invest in all the ministries. Unlike the other government, that blew \$15 billion and—

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Thank you. Next question.

GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY

Mr. Stephen Lecce: To the Minister of Finance: From an intergenerational perspective, the last 15 budgets in this province have been the most unfair in our history—unfair to rack up the largest subnational debt in the world; unfair to spend a billion dollars per month on servicing the debt rather than investing in jobs training and post-secondary education. It is unfair that every single child born in this province today automatically carries with them a debt load of \$24,000. My nieces deserve better, and so does every child in this province.

On this side of the House, we believe that saddling the next generation with billions and billions in deficit spending is not compassionate, nor is it morally defensible. It is wrong and, under the leadership of this Premier, it will end.

Can the Minister of Finance reaffirm that he will restore accountability for our young people and end the intergenerational theft, once and for all?

Hon. Victor Fedeli: Thank you to the member from King–Vaughan.

Under the cover of empty promises, the previous Liberal government mortgaged the future of our children, our grandchildren and their children. The worst part? The previous government is taking no responsibility for the accounting schemes they created. This is about more than the numbers; this is about accountability and trust.

The Auditor General was very clear in talking about the Liberal government. She said, “It is clear ... that the government’s intention in creating the accounting/financing” scheme—“design ... was to avoid affecting its fiscal plan.”

The Liberals knew what they were doing, and the select committee will make sure we all know what they were doing. We’re doing so with the full trust and confidence of the public, and it’s about time this happened.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Stop the clock. Restart the clock.

Supplementary.

Mr. Stephen Lecce: Through you, Speaker, back to the minister: It is about time that we have a Minister of Finance committed to ensuring that every child can achieve their full, God-given potential. Thank you, Minister.

Under the former Liberal government, our young people paid the price. While taxes rose, incomes stagnated. While the size of government expanded, youth employment contracted. While household debt grew, the provincial debt skyrocketed.

The Liberal legacy, in a word, can be summarized as unfair—unfair to those who long for income and social mobility, unfair to those who work hard, and unfair to our young people, who aspire to succeed in this country.

1120

Let us be clear: The intergenerational unfairness by the former Liberal government undermines the prosperity of future generations, and our children—all of our children and grandchildren—deserve better.

Can the minister outline how our government is changing the trajectory for the better and bringing back a spirit of hope to our young people?

Hon. Victor Fedeli: Speaker, I’ll tell you exactly what we’re doing to make this right, starting with our intention to form a select committee on financial transparency.

This morning, the disastrous record of failed policy decisions of the previous Liberal government was laid bare for all to see. Not only did the Liberal government avoid showing us the true numbers, they knew their accounting scheme would cost the taxpayers a further \$4 billion in interest just to keep their numbers secret—\$4 billion more in money, and the Liberals knew about it.

Now the select committee will ensure that everyone knows about it. That’s the first step in restoring accountability and trust in this government for today and for generations to come. Only then can we move on.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Stop the clock. Order. The member for Don Valley East, come to order. Minister of Transportation, come to order.

Start the clock. Next question.

HAZARDOUS WASTE

Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens: My question is for the Minister of the Environment.

Port Weller is a wonderful community in St. Catharines. I want to speak about the concerns the people of Port Weller are having regarding a substance called clinker dust.

There are documented health risks when exposed to this dust. It has been piled in Port Weller Marine Terminal for well over a year now. While this toxic dust is piled up, the winds carry it across the neighbourhood, coating people’s homes and green spaces.

Will the minister commit to ensuring the safety of the Port Weller residents by ordering the dust to be contained while being transported and removed from the site immediately?

Hon. Rod Phillips: Mr. Speaker, through you to the member: Thank you for the question. The Ministry of the Environment, Conservation and Parks takes all of these concerns very seriously. Part of our commitment is to clean air, clean water and clean land, and that’s a challenge we face every day.

I’m familiar with the situation. I’d be happy to speak to the member specifically about it and to make sure that I’m apprised of all the details, but I can assure you the ministry is aware of the situation and we will be taking the appropriate actions.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary?

Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens: It goes without saying that the most essential issue at hand is ensuring the

health of the people. This clinker dust is certainly a health and safety issue. It is also a matter of citizens of the Port Weller area losing their quality of life. Property values are decreasing and the people can't sell their homes. Residents have expressed that because of the clinker dust, they can no longer enjoy the community.

Will the minister commit to engaging with the residents, the local government of St. Catharines and the relevant authorities to put a stop to the clinker dust plaguing the Port Weller community within St. Catharines?

Hon. Rod Phillips: Mr. Speaker, through you to the member: I appreciate her advocacy on behalf of her community.

The ministry is engaged. It will stay engaged. Again, I'd be happy to get from you directly the ways that you think we can be helpful and I can be helpful.

But this is true; you're right about the health and safety concerns. Obviously, we on this side as well are very concerned about anything that affects the health and safety of Ontario residents.

ENERGY POLICIES

Mr. Rick Nicholls: My question is to the Minister of Energy. Last week, 15 years of bad energy decisions came to an end as our government repealed the Green Energy Act.

I know that the mismanagement of the former government created this mess and I am happy that we are taking steps to clean it up. The Green Energy Act is one of those bad decisions, and I know repealing it is the right decision for the people.

Can the Minister of Energy please explain to the members of this House why it is so important to repeal the Green Energy Act?

Hon. Greg Rickford: Mr. Speaker, he sure can. I want to thank the member for Chatham-Kent-Leamington for his important question.

The government has made it clear that we take our duty to consult very seriously. The exact opposite occurred with the Green Energy Act. It allowed the previous Liberal government to ram wasteful green energy projects into communities that didn't want them, for a province that didn't need them.

Sadly, we've learned a few more things in the past couple of days about this act and actions that we've taken in the past to deal with a \$15-billion sinkhole. Sadly, colleagues—through you, Mr. Speaker—this is in large part due to poor policy decision-making of the previous Liberal government when it came to energy.

We're going to take action that reduces the energy bills of families, small businesses and large employers in this province in our plan for prosperity.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary.

Mr. Rick Nicholls: Back to the minister, Mr. Speaker: I would like to thank Minister Rickford for championing this important bill and standing up for the people of Ontario.

I am pleased to know that municipalities, especially in my riding, won't be forced to house green energy contracts for energy our system simply does not need. Giving power back to the people is one of our government's most important promises. I am delighted to know that our government is making good on that promise.

Could the minister please tell the members of this House again how repealing the Green Energy Act is going to help rural communities?

Hon. Greg Rickford: It's clear that the official opposition party are madder than a bunch of stomped-on polecats, because in the race to June 7, the people of Ontario weren't buying in to the invitation to jump into the "spend-DP-mobile," which demonstrated it wasn't capable of tackling big issues. It had no plan. It couldn't see a clear path to the finish line—the plan for prosperity, Mr. Speaker—with big governments, big spending, expensive fuel, the largest carbon tax in the world, and a track record of propping up the Liberals 97% of the time. They chose team Ford, Mr. Speaker. It goes by the number 76, and so far, it's got a track record of dealing with those speed bumps that the previous Liberal Party included.

Now, \$15-billion worth of debt is no ordinary speed bump, Mr. Speaker, but they have the confidence in our team to take it across the finish line and put Ontario back on the podium, as Ontario is the economic engine of Canada, not—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Stop the clock. Restart the clock. Next question.

AMÉLIORATION D'AUTOROUTE HIGHWAY IMPROVEMENT

M. Taras Natyshak: Ma question est pour le ministre des Transports.

Speaker, on May 23, the Premier made a promise to my community, and that of the member for Chatham-Kent-Leamington, that he would begin the twinning of Highway 3, the third and final phase. He said that he would do this, "not a year down the road, but immediately."

Les accidents et les fermetures de rues continuent, et « immédiatement » n'arrive jamais.

The accidents and road closures continue, Speaker, and "immediately" has come and gone.

Meanwhile, the Premier has found the time to immediately meddle in the elections at Toronto city hall. He's immediately cut school repair funding, and he's immediately appointed friends and insiders to patronage positions.

Can the minister tell the people of Essex county why he has broken his promise to immediately begin the construction of the third and final phase of the widening of Highway 3?

Hon. John Yakubuski: I want to thank the member for his question. I recognize that he has been an advocate for this four-laning for some time.

The Premier made it clear that this is a project that our government considers to be a priority. There are highway projects all across this province. Highway safety is and will always be the number one priority in my Ministry of Transportation.

1130

I would ask the member to be patient. This government was sworn in just a few short months ago. We are currently in the process of determining our next 10-year highway capital plan. I look forward to talking to him more about this, but we have projects all across this province that we are committed to. Absolutely, Highway 3 is one of those projects that my Premier and I consider to be priority projects. The safety of those people who drive on that highway every day—that is not something we have forgotten about. It is still very much top of mind.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary?

Mr. Taras Natyshak: The Minister of Transportation asks my community and that of Chatham-Kent–Leamington to be patient. We have waited for 16 years. People are dying on this roadway. There’s no more time for patience. We need this project done and completed now. The Premier and the Minister of Transportation obviously have a unique understanding of the word “immediately.” Promises made, promises broken, obviously.

My community wants to know exactly when we can expect this government to begin the twinning of Highway 3. Give us a date right now. We’ve run out of patience.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Members, please take your seats.

Minister?

Hon. John Yakabuski: Well, for the benefit of the member—am I good to go, Speaker?

Interjection: You’re good to go.

Hon. John Yakabuski: For the benefit of the member from Windsor–Tecumseh, let me make this crystal clear: The widening of Highway 3 is a priority for our government. Unlike the previous government that has saddled us with a \$340-billion debt and a hidden \$15-billion deficit, the widening of Highway 3, for this government, is a priority. I recognize that you waited 16 years under the previous government. You won’t be waiting 16 years under this government.

Let me repeat myself: The safety of every resident and every member of the motoring public in this province is our highest priority. Widening Highway 3 remains as one of those priorities. I look forward to chatting with the member on a personal basis on this—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Thank you.
Next question.

COMMUNITY SAFETY

Mr. David Piccini: My question today is for the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services.

Yesterday, the London Free Press reported that Terri-Lynne McClintic, the woman convicted of the kidnapping,

rape and murder of eight-year-old Tori Stafford, a young girl from Woodstock, Ontario, has now been transferred from a prison to a healing lodge in Saskatchewan.

As a member of this government, I am shocked and outraged that such a decision could come under the federal government, to release this dangerous individual from prison. It is simply wrong and morally reprehensible.

To the minister: What actions will you take to ensure that the decision can be corrected?

Hon. Michael A. Tibollo: I’d like to thank the member from Northumberland–Peterborough South for the question.

This matter came to my attention this morning. As a member of this government—we take community safety and correctional systems seriously. I’m also shocked and disappointed that such a decision could be made by our federal government.

Our government has remained committed to improving our community safety and correctional services. Decisions like this, made by our federal government, can seriously impact the public’s confidence in our correctional systems.

Rest assured, Mr. Speaker, that I will make sure that we remain in contact with our federal government and also discuss this issue with our Attorney General to ensure that closure can be brought to the family of Tori Stafford and to ensure that justice can be delivered. My ministry will continue to monitor this matter as it unfolds, to see what we can do in this unfortunate situation that was created by the federal government and try to correct what has been done.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary?

Mr. David Piccini: Thank you to the minister for that answer.

After such a tragic, shocking event that shook those in the community of Woodstock, Ontario, the family of Tori Stafford deserves closure on how justice will now be served for the horrendous crime committed. After originally serving in a multi-level security prison, Terri-Lynne McClintic is now being transferred to a minimum-medium security healing lodge with more relaxed and independent quarters.

What is the minister going to do to ensure that sentencing for heinous criminals is carried out in full, as is intended?

Hon. Michael A. Tibollo: Mr. Speaker, I refer this to the Minister of Agriculture.

Hon. Ernie Hardeman: I’d like to thank the member for the question to the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services.

I’m shocked and saddened to hear about the unfortunate news and the change in direction by the federal government. I would like to express that my thoughts, first and foremost, rest with the family of Tori Stafford and the community of Woodstock in my riding.

As the member from Oxford, I want to let the member know that I will be writing a letter to the federal government immediately asking why such a decision could

possibly be made. I'm confident that the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services will do everything in his power to encourage the federal government to reverse this decision and bring justice to the family of Tori Stafford.

NORTHERN TRANSPORTATION

Mr. Michael Mantha: My question is to the Premier. Premier, Huron Central Railway is in need of funding before the end of December to ensure its survival.

During the campaign, the Premier promised his support for Huron Central Railway and said the money could come from the Northern Ontario Heritage Fund. New Democrats and Progressive Conservatives were on board to save the railway.

If the issue is a priority for this government and not a partisan issue, why is it so difficult for the member for Sault Ste. Marie to arrange a meeting between the ministers and representatives of the Huron Central Railway task force?

Hon. Doug Ford: Minister of Energy and Northern Development.

Hon. Greg Rickford: I thank the member for his question, and I thank the member from Sault Ste. Marie for his hard work not just on behalf of Sault Ste. Marie but across northern Ontario. He's doing a great job.

He, like myself and all of our colleagues here, understand the priorities for northern Ontario moving forward. We need a dynamic transportation network. We have busing matters on the table. We have train opportunities and challenges, frankly, on the horizon. We're going to make good decisions that benefit all of northern Ontario in its vastness.

I can assure the member opposite that in the not-too-distant future, we will be rolling out a series of decisions and announcements with respect to how northern Ontario can contribute to an economy for Ontario that will help break down this \$15-billion deficit, this sinkhole created by the Liberal Party of Ontario in their previous status as the government.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary.

Mr. Michael Mantha: Again to the Premier: He and his team recognized during the campaign that ensuring the survival of the railroad was crucial to the economy and well-being of the north. Will the Conservative government follow through with their "promise made, promise kept," or will they let thousands of jobs be lost in northern Ontario?

Hon. Greg Rickford: I find it rich for somebody from the NDP to talk about the loss of jobs. Just think of what would have happened if the NDP had won the last election. How many people from the nuclear sector would have been cut loose?

I'll make no apologies in this place or defend my responsibilities as a minister now, or as I was then, to stand up for mining jobs, to stand up for forestry jobs, to stand up for agriculture over in northeastern Ontario and to ensure that we have the right transportation networks to

meet the needs of our communities and to contribute to an economy in northern Ontario that will help break down this \$15-billion sinkhole of debt that was created by the previous Liberal government and propped up by the New Democratic proppers, Mr. Speaker.

NATURAL GAS

Mr. Bill Walker: I'd like to direct my question to the government House leader. It's my understanding that the Liberal government is actually putting in some reasoned amendments, and I'd like to ask the minister why they're delaying the natural gas expansion that the province has been waiting for for 15 years under their leadership.

Hon. Todd Smith: That's a really good question, to the member from Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound. I can't understand why the current Liberal independent members would try and hold up something that they promised before the 2014 election, and that would be to expand natural gas into rural Ontario.

For four years they got nothing done on that promise, Mr. Speaker, and I'd like to give full credit to the Minister of Infrastructure, the Minister of Energy, the Minister of Agriculture and, of course, our Premier and the entire team here for ensuring that we get things done—not just for a couple of ridings. Eighty different communities across rural Ontario will be able to get natural gas in their communities, which will bring down the cost of energy for them and their businesses, their agribusinesses, the agriculture sector, which is driving our economy here in Ontario.

Shame on the Liberal independent members for holding that up when we want to get things done for the people of Ontario.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): And that brings question period to an end.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I beg to inform the House that, pursuant to standing order 98(c), a change has been made to the order of precedence on the ballot list for private members' public business such that Mr. Sarkaria assumes ballot item number 24 and Mr. Hillier assumes ballot item number 99.

DISASTER RELIEF

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I understand that the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities has a point of order.

Hon. Merrilee Fullerton: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am rising in the chamber today on return from Kanata-Carleton, where we had a devastating tornado—and multiple tornadoes now—on Friday. I want to give thanks to everyone who has been helping our communities repair, heal and rebuild. My thoughts and prayers are with those people affected.

I want to first thank the first responders, who have done an amazing job being on-site and continuing to help us and support our communities. I want to acknowledge the volunteers, the people who have donated and the people who have supported our communities in their time of need to help get us back on our feet.

I want to thank Minister Clark and the Premier for being so swift in their response with the disaster recovery activation program.

I hope that all of you will keep the people of my community in your thoughts and prayers as we move forward with courage and resiliency.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): There being no deferred votes, this House stands in recess until 3 p.m. this afternoon.

The House recessed from 1142 to 1500.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

KINGSTON WRITERSFEST

Mr. Ian Arthur: I want to take this opportunity to mention a special arts event going on in Kingston this week. The Kingston WritersFest is an event that we are very proud of as a city. Beginning on September 26, this five-day festival features over 40 events celebrating the written and spoken word. It is run by its passionate artistic director, Barbara Bell, and its dedicated teams of directors and volunteers.

This year, the Kingston WritersFest is celebrating its 10th anniversary. Over the past 10 years, it has attracted writers famous throughout the world—writers such as Nobel Prize winner J.M. Coetzee, Booker Prize winner Margaret Atwood, Peter Carey, Annie Proulx, Thomas King and many, many more. The list includes 53 Governor General Award winners, two Pulitzer Prize winners and 10 Giller Prize winners.

The Kingston WritersFest is an excellent example of how the passion of the constituents of Kingston and the Islands brings together world-class talent in the setting of our historic city. It is events like these and the embracing and promotion of culture that help make Kingston and the Islands the incredible place that it is.

If any of you are near Kingston this weekend, I urge you to take some time and attend some of the events.

I want to wish the Kingston WritersFest the best of luck this week and say that I cannot wait to see what the next 10 years hold in store for this wonderful festival.

APPLE INDUSTRY

Mr. Parm Gill: I am proud to represent a riding that has many family-owned apple farms like Bousfield's Apples and Cider, Springridge Farm, Willis Family Fruit Farm and Chudleigh's farm, which, Mr. Speaker, as you know, is actually on the border of both of our ridings.

Bousfield's Farm is a certified organic farm that is run by third-generation Bousfield family. They produce over 20 different kinds of apples, Mr. Speaker.

Apples are not only a great source of nutrition; they add to our economy in Ontario and the region of Halton in a very big way. According to the study by the Ontario Apple Growers, the apple industry in Ontario generates an annual economic activity of over half a billion dollars and generates over 5,000 jobs in the province of Ontario. We more than pull our weight in the Halton region by contributing almost 15% of the total apple crop in Ontario each year.

In celebration of this year's apple crop, I was proud to showcase some apples from Bousfield's today in both lobbies, and I hope that every member of this House had an opportunity to enjoy one.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to take this opportunity to thank apple farmers in Milton and across Ontario for all the contributions they make towards our economy each and every day.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I thank the member from Milton.

Members' statements?

INJURED WORKERS

Ms. Rima Berns-McGown: Last Friday in my riding of Beaches–East York, I met with a group of brave, thoughtful individuals who had all been injured on the job but who had been denied compensation by the Workplace Safety and Insurance Board. Among them were the phenomenal Women of Inspiration, all of whom are injured worker women who got together to fight for their rights as injured workers but also to create a space for mutual support as women, as mothers, as caregivers and to cope with their feelings of isolation and grief.

Among them, too, was a constituent. Ken used to own a home in Mississauga. He had a wife and a family, but then he was injured on the job. WSIB refused him compensation, blaming a high school sports injury for the condition that left him unable to work. Over time, he lost his home and his family broke up. Ken struggled with mental health issues, poverty, addiction and homelessness. He was forced onto ODSP, a social program that is not meant to and should not be used to support injured workers.

Ken and the injured workers who came to see me spoke to me of the myriad ways in which workplace injuries had pushed them into poverty and struggles with mental health issues that they had never known prior to their injuries. They passed along a petition that I will be tabling shortly.

Let us act to make the WSIB what it was intended to be: a fund that gives workers a quick and speedy resolution to workplace injuries.

WOODLAND CULTURAL CENTRE

Mr. Will Bouma: I stand here today to bring attention to an initiative that is occurring in Brantford–Brant on September 29 and 30.

The dark legacy of residential schools in Canada is one that still haunts us today. It is vitally important that we do not forget what happened in these schools. The Woodland Cultural Centre, formerly known as the Mohawk Institute

Indian Residential School, was a residential school in Brantford. Like other residential schools, the Mohawk Institute attempted to deprive Indigenous children of their cultural heritage.

Parental rights are the mainstay of any society. To contemplate that just a few decades ago, generations of our youth were separated from their parents without consent deeply troubles me, and we have to do our best to make this right.

This continued until 1970, when the Mohawk Institute closed its doors. In 1972, the Woodland Cultural Centre took its place, with the goals of promoting Indigenous crafts and culture as well as acting as a concrete reminder of the cruelty that was inflicted on Indigenous children in the residential school system.

On September 29 and 30, the Woodland Cultural Centre will be hosting a gathering of survivors of residential schools. This gathering will serve as a place where survivors of the horrors of the residential school system, and their families, can be honoured. Here, survivors will be able to come together and encourage each other on their journey towards healing. Everyone is welcome.

ANTI-RACISM ACTIVITIES

Ms. Laura Mae Lindo: As the Yoruba proverb says, “A sentence may ruin a case; a sentence may mend a case.” I would like to take a moment to explain why Ontarians are asking the Premier to denounce Faith Goldy.

Like many in my riding of Kitchener Centre, I was worried when I saw photos and video of the Premier of Ontario smiling and posing with someone whom so many had already labelled a white supremacist.

After reviewing question period yesterday, I was further disheartened, because it became clear that the Premier and his caucus did not understand that you cannot do anti-racism work while posing with a person who holds white supremacist views.

Today, the Premier said, “I totally denounce—I repeat, denounce, denounce, denounce—anyone who wants to talk hate speech.” But how can this government claim to denounce hate speech while not publicly distancing themselves from those with anti-Semitic and anti-immigrant views?

I’ve called on my PC colleagues in Waterloo region to denounce Faith Goldy and the views that she represents. Ontarians want to hear the Premier say that he does not feel comfortable with Ford Nation being associated with Faith Nation. Again, I offer to speak with any of my colleagues in government to help them mend Ontario with their words and their deeds. This is my promise to you.

GIES FAMILY CENTRE

Mr. Mike Harris: The importance of quality palliative care facilities for Waterloo region and across the province is only increasing. For example, based on the most recent numbers provided by Stats Canada, we know that there are

going to be 25,000 people over the age of 85 in Waterloo region by 2036.

It is with great enthusiasm that I take the opportunity today to shine some light on a new hospice, the Gies Family Centre, that is being constructed in north Waterloo over the next year.

I would like to take this time to highlight, firstly, the positive impact that the Gies Family Centre will have on Waterloo region and, secondly, the very generous donors whose contributions have ensured that this facility becomes a reality.

With its new beds, doctor and client services, and administration and education wing, this facility will provide high-quality palliative care services for patients and their loved ones 24/7.

A number of key public and private contributors have come together in financing the construction and eventual operational costs associated with the Gies Family Centre, and they are deserving of recognition here today. Firstly, I would like to recognize the amazing contributions made by Bill and Gert Gies and the rest of the Gies family. As the cornerstone donors of this facility, the Gies family contributed \$2.5 million.

I would also like to thank Ian and Bettina Cook, who are also deserving of recognition here with their impressive contribution of \$1 million towards this project.

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Additionally, I’m proud of the work that our government is doing to help get this facility up and running. Most notably, the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care has committed up to \$2 million in funding towards capital costs associated with the construction of this building.

FLEMINGDON PARK BASKETBALL COURTS

Mr. Michael Coteau: Today I rise to talk about an exciting new initiative that’s currently being completed in my riding of Don Valley East. In Flemington Park, the neighbourhood where I grew up, a fantastic network of community leads and local organizations, the Friends of Flemington Park group, has been advocating for the revitalization of the Flemington basketball court. While the basketball courts already see a fair amount of usage from the community, the lack of proper lighting, safe and adequate seating, and suitable markings and pavement quality takes away from its usability.

Earlier this year, MLSE and Drake’s OVO brand pledged \$1 million over the next three years to refurbish and refresh local community basketball courts. Seeing this new partnership opportunity, Friends of Flemington Park worked with the city of Toronto and was chosen as one of the four courts across the city to receive support for this initiative. The revitalized courts will open up next month with new markings, nets, backboards, pavement, a re-designed allocated space for people with disabilities, and a new seating area.

Mr. Speaker, this is just one of the thousands of examples of grassroots-based community organizations

across our province that are making huge differences in all of our communities. I would like to take this opportunity to thank the Friends of Flemingdon Park for their incredible work and to congratulate them for this incredible initiative.

LEASHES BY THE LAKE

Ms. Christine Hogarth: This past Saturday, my family and I attended Leashes by the Lake in my riding of Etobicoke–Lakeshore, an amazing annual event hosted by the Etobicoke Humane Society, an organization which I hope to work very closely with. I would like to take this opportunity to thank Cristina Scassa, Joanne Hewat, Karen Heaslip and Natasha Mistry, some of the dedicated volunteer board members of the Etobicoke Humane Society, for their commitment to animal protection and to providing ongoing awareness.

It was a pleasure to spend the weekend with my family at Leashes by the Lake.

No event is complete without the commitment of dedicated volunteers, who work by offering sponsorships, donating raffle items, raising pledges or by registering to walk, with or without their dog. I brought along my dog Bruce, who left full of treats and with a ton of attention. He loved coming to work with me that day.

The purpose of this event, over and above enjoying the last few days of summer by the lake, is to raise the much-needed funds for animal protection at this no-kill shelter. All proceeds from this event will directly benefit the animals in their care. This event, in conjunction with Mimico-by-the-Lake BIA, was spectacular and had something to offer people of all ages, such as a barbecue, pet supplies, and face-painting for the children.

This relationship is very important as I have two rescue pets, Bruce and Edward, and later this term I plan on bringing forward a private member's bill to stop the inhumane treatment of animals and to put an end to puppy mills and kitten mills in Ontario. I hope to have support for this bill from all sides of the House.

I look forward to continuing to represent the Etobicoke Humane Society and other community organizations that enhance our wonderful community. If you are ever looking to add a new pet to your home, please consider visiting the humane society first. There are many pets who are looking for their forever home.

NIAGARA GRAPE AND WINE FESTIVAL

Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens: I would like to congratulate the Niagara wine community for hosting another incredible grape and wine festival, the largest festival in Canada. Every year, the festival brings in countless people to St. Catharines to celebrate the incredible wine produced by wineries across the region.

In employing over 18,000 people, the wine industry is both a staple of the Niagara economy, as well as providing an incredible product that is revered across the globe. Residents in Niagara know that there's no better way to

unwind after a long, busy week than with a glass of Niagara wine. I am happy to express my support for the incredible product our wineries produce year in and year out.

Congratulations on the 67th Niagara Grape and Wine Festival, and thank you to those who have worked tirelessly to put on another year of incredible fun in the heart of downtown St. Catharines.

Please join us on Saturday, September 29, for the Grape and Wine Parade in its 67th year, journeying through the downtown of St. Catharines to the historical Montebello Park, and for a wonderful experience in tasting the VQA wines of Niagara.

DOWN SYNDROME AWARENESS FUN WALK

Mr. Dave Smith: Prior to the election in June, Dan Maloney, my CFO, asked me to attend an event this past weekend, and I was quite happy to do it. Jennifer Thomas, the organizer of the event, put together quite possibly one of the best I have seen.

For those of you who don't know, this past weekend was the Down Syndrome Buddy Walk. It was held for the first time in Lakefield, a small village just outside of the city of Peterborough. We had a goal set this year for 100 walkers, and we were looking to raise \$10,000.

I'd like to shout out to a couple of people in particular. Police constable Mark Hubble came in three hours early to bring a police vehicle in so that those who were participating would have the opportunity to see it and go through and actually sit in it.

We had, in total, 400 participants. The goal originally was set for 100. Our initial goal of raising \$10,000 was surpassed by \$16,000. We raised just over \$26,000.

More importantly, we raised awareness for Down syndrome and the exceptional people that this group supports.

In total, we had 26 VIPs who took part in it. I'm quite happy to say that it was one of the best events I have attended this year.

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT AGENCIES

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I beg to inform the House that today the Clerk received the report on intended appointments dated September 25, 2018, of the Standing Committee on Government Agencies. Pursuant to standing order 108(f)(9), the report is deemed to be adopted by the House.

Report deemed adopted.

MOTIONS

HOUSE SITTINGS

Mr. Stephen Lecce: I move that the schedule of the House for Wednesday, September 26, as set out in standing order 8(a), be revised by substituting “2:00 p.m.” and “2:05 p.m.” for “3:00 p.m.” and “3:05 p.m.,” respectively.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Mr. Lecce has moved that the meeting schedule of the House for Wednesday, September 26, as set out in standing order 8(a), be revised by substituting “2:00 p.m.” and “2:05 p.m.” for “3:00 p.m.” and “3:05 p.m.,” respectively.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: No.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Does the member for Timmins wish to make an intervention?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I was pre-empting the vote on that.

Mr. Speaker, you’ve got the government, on the one hand, who is saying, “We want to reach across the aisle and we want to work with you.” They are trying to portray this image that, somehow or other, they’re serious about working with the opposition in order to be able to move the agenda of the House through.

You can’t come to us two minutes—or, literally, 10 minutes—before you move a motion in the House that you’re going to extend the sitting of the House by an hour tomorrow. Everybody has got things to do; everybody has got schedules they’ve got to follow. If you want to be able to do that, you’ve got to come to us somewhat in advance.

We don’t have an opposition to sitting here at night. We don’t have an opposition to sitting here earlier in the day. That’s not the issue here. The issue is, if you’re truly serious about working with the opposition—in this case, the official opposition—you can’t come to us 10 minutes before and give us a motion such as this, because, quite frankly, it doesn’t lead to the kinds of discussions and the kinds of relationships that we need in order to be able to work together.

There are things that need to be done in this House. I’ve said it before, Mr. Speaker. I was quite clear that we understand that the government got elected, the government has got a majority and the government is going to introduce bills. That’s their responsibility and that’s what the standing orders call for. I also understand, in the end, that the government has to get its way. But there needs to be some quid pro quo with the government and understanding that you also have to respect the official opposition and other members of this House when it comes to how you move your agenda through this House.

To come in here literally five or 10 minutes before you’re going to table a motion is problematic from the perspective of how we all schedule members to be in this House.

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I’m imploring the government. We’re going to vote against this motion—on the simple fact that we’re not opposed to sitting in the House for extra time. I want to put that on the record. But I want to put a place marker out to the government: If you’re going to do this, there is something called a House leaders’ meeting. We meet every

Thursday. I don’t believe for one second—because I sat in government, as I’ve sat on this side of the House—that you cannot come forward to us on a Thursday and say, “By the way, we’re going to need more debate time, so this is the following thing that we want to do.” At least we can organize ourselves around that.

I want to put on the record very clearly: New Democrats are not opposed to sitting in the House extra hours. I sat in this House 24 hours a day for 12 days one time, and I sat in the House until midnight as often as the government called the House until midnight back in the days that we had night sessions. My point is that you have to give fair warning.

We’re not going to oppose you towards those types of things, as long as we have an ability to work out some of the scheduling. To change the schedule of the House at the last minute like this tells me you guys either have no control over your agenda and you guys are flying by the seat of your pants—

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Could you make your remarks through the Chair?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Sorry, Speaker. That is a very good point and I was out of order.

I’m saying, through you, Mr. Speaker, it’s either that the government is flying by the seat of their pants when it comes to running this House and they’re not able to get their stuff together in order to do it properly, or they’re trying to essentially not co-operate with the opposition, as they pretend to tell us they want to do.

I give this warning to the government: We will vote against this motion today not because we’re opposed to the House sitting extra hours, but because you cannot do this at the last minute. That is not the way you run a business and it’s not the way that you run the House. You can’t pretend to be big, smart businesspeople out in the private sector, because you would never go to your shift workers and say, “Oh, by the way, at the last minute everybody has got to change their lives because I didn’t know what the heck I was doing and I’ve decided to bring everybody in at the last minute for whatever reason.”

So I say to the members across the way: You have to run this House more efficiently. That is done by talking to the official opposition and it’s how we do those things.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Any further interventions by members?

I’m going to read the motion again. Mr. Lecce has moved that the meeting schedule of the House for Wednesday, September 26, as set out in standing order 8(a), be revised by substituting “2 p.m.” and “2:05 p.m.” for “3 p.m.” and “3:05 p.m.,” respectively.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I heard some noes.

All those in favour of the motion will please say “aye.”

All those opposed will please say “nay.”

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Carried.

Motion agreed to.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

JOUR DES FRANCO-ONTARIENS ET DES FRANCO-ONTARIENNES

L'hon. Caroline Mulroney: À titre de ministre déléguée aux Affaires francophones, je suis heureuse, chers collègues, de prendre la parole devant vous, en ce 25 septembre 2018, à l'occasion du Jour des Franco-Ontariens et des Franco-Ontariennes. À chaque année, le 25 septembre, l'Ontario honore et célèbre la contribution de la communauté franco-ontarienne à la vie culturelle, historique, sociale, économique et politique de la province.

Les francophones, après plus de 400 années de présence en Ontario, font partie intégrante de l'histoire de notre province et incarnent la richesse et la créativité de notre société ontarienne contemporaine. Aujourd'hui, plus de 600 000 Franco-Ontariens vivent en Ontario et 1,5 million d'Ontariennes et d'Ontariens parlent français. À l'instar de la population de la province, la francophonie ontarienne est dynamique, diversifiée et résolument ouverte sur le monde.

Je suis très fière, monsieur le Président, de servir cette francophonie ontarienne. J'ai grandi en Ontario, dans une famille bilingue, où le français a toujours été présent.

La langue française, le fait français et la communauté franco-ontarienne font partie intégrante de l'identité de notre province. Que l'on soit du centre-sud-ouest, de l'est, du nord ou bien du sud de l'Ontario, la présence dynamique des francophones se fait sentir partout en Ontario.

Que ce soit le taux de fréquentation croissant des écoles de langue française ou les classes d'immersion, l'engouement actuel pour le français démontre à quel point le français et le bilinguisme comptent parmi les valeurs fondamentales de notre société.

L'Ontario est la province du Canada qui a de loin la plus grande population de francophones à l'extérieur du Québec. Il s'agit sans aucun doute d'un atout important pour l'Ontario, économiquement, socialement et culturellement.

La langue française et notre communauté francophone nous donnent un avantage concurrentiel indéniable que nous devons utiliser efficacement. Dans un monde de plus en plus mondialisé où la diversification des échanges est essentielle, notre province entend promouvoir tous ses atouts, y compris sa francophonie.

En exploitant la valeur ajoutée du bilinguisme anglais-français, les entreprises ontariennes augmentent les flux commerciaux et les investissements entre les juridictions et les pays appartenant à des marchés à prédominance francophone. Aujourd'hui, nous célébrons les contributions de la francophonie ontarienne à la richesse et à la prospérité de notre province.

C'est pour toutes ces raisons que je profite de ce 25 septembre pour souligner que le gouvernement croit

fermement au développement des communautés francophones partout dans la province. Nous allons donc déployer tous les efforts nécessaires pour bien cibler nos actions et faire en sorte que les francophones aient accès aux services dont ils ont besoin et, par le biais de leur esprit d'entreprise et d'innovation, continuent de contribuer à la vitalité sociale et économique de l'Ontario.

Notre gouvernement s'est engagé à travailler avec la communauté francophone pour mettre les accents là où il le faut, comme le dit si bien l'hymne de Paul Demers et de François Dubé, « Notre Place ».

Pour y arriver, je travaille étroitement avec mes collègues au Conseil des ministres pour améliorer la qualité des services en français offerts en Ontario, notamment dans les domaines de la santé, de l'éducation, et des services en enfance. Mon adjointe parlementaire la députée de Glengarry–Prescott–Russell et moi travaillons avec notre collègue la ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée afin de permettre un meilleur accès en français aux services en santé ainsi qu'aux soins de longue durée. Il est clair que la population francophone en Ontario est vieillissante, à l'instar d'ailleurs au Canada. Nous devons agir en conséquence afin d'offrir les services nécessaires.

Nous faisons face, également, à une crise en santé mentale. Nous travaillons pour trouver des solutions qui fonctionnent ici en Ontario. La ministre et moi avons eu l'occasion de discuter de ces enjeux importants avec quelques intervenants du milieu de la santé, et nous allons continuer ce travail important.

En tant que procureure générale, monsieur le Président, je peux vous assurer que nous travaillons ardemment dans l'atteinte de reproduire le succès du projet pilote au palais de justice d'Ottawa. Nous allons étudier comment développer ce projet qui assure l'offre des services juridiques en français dans d'autres palais de justice à travers l'Ontario.

De plus, notre gouvernement souhaite réduire le fardeau administratif et en même temps améliorer l'accès aux services offerts en français en Ontario. Pour y arriver, nous allons étudier comment nous pouvons moderniser la Loi sur les services en français de sorte que ces dispositions reflètent la réalité et les besoins actuels. Nous allons également revoir le mécanisme de désignation afin de réduire la bureaucratie entourant ce processus.

Notre but ultime est de mieux servir les francophones en Ontario chez eux. Pour assurer des collectivités fortes, il nous faut une économie en croissance qui profite à tout le monde. C'est pourquoi nous mènerons une tournée afin de rencontrer les entrepreneurs francophones et les entreprises qui font affaire en français. Ensemble, nous allons identifier les lacunes et les obstacles qui nuisent aux entreprises et qui freinent la création d'emplois. En réduisant le fardeau administratif qui pèse sur les entreprises, nous pouvons leur permettre de réaliser leur plein potentiel et de faire avancer nos collectivités. L'Ontario a un potentiel en commerce international énorme et inexploité, et c'est en rencontrant les entrepreneurs de chez nous que nous pouvons développer

les stratégies nécessaires pour miser sur notre main-d'œuvre bilingue.

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Cette tournée sera également une occasion de fournir une vitrine à ces entreprises, en plus de promouvoir leurs contributions économiques à l'ensemble des Ontariens et Ontariennes. Nous annoncerons les détails de cette tournée sous peu.

L'immigration est aussi un autre élément clé pour assurer l'avenir de la francophonie, de nos collectivités et de notre économie. Mais, après 15 ans, il est clair que les politiques du passé visant à faire croître l'immigration francophone n'ont pas fonctionné. La cible de 5 % fixée par le gouvernement libéral n'a jamais été atteinte. En 2017, notre province a accueilli 2 650 immigrants francophones, soit 2,4 % des immigrants accueillis en Ontario.

Vu que les efforts de l'ancien gouvernement n'ont pas fonctionné, nous voulons travailler avec les intervenants afin de trouver des pistes de solution innovatrices pour faire de l'immigration une force pour la francophonie en Ontario.

Comme vous le voyez, monsieur le Président, notre gouvernement est à l'écoute pour livrer des résultats concrets aux francophones de l'Ontario et, ensemble, nous allons mettre les accents là où il le faut.

Enfin, j'aimerais mentionner que le gouvernement est particulièrement fier de dévoiler officiellement, aujourd'hui, à l'occasion du Jour des Franco-Ontariens et des Franco-Ontariennes, le monument provincial dédié à la communauté franco-ontarienne sur le terrain de Queen's Park devant l'Assemblée législative de l'Ontario. Ce monument, cette place publique, se veut un lieu de rassemblement à la fois symbolique et convivial qui rend un hommage vibrant à l'apport inestimable des francophones au développement de l'Ontario.

C'est un privilège pour notre province de pouvoir compter sur une communauté francophone forte et fièrement enracinée en Ontario, une communauté entreprenante, créative et portée sur l'avenir. Je vous invite à vous joindre à moi pour souhaiter à toutes et à tous un magnifique Jour des Franco-Ontariens et des Franco-Ontariennes.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Thank you. We have responses.

M^{me} France Gélinas: Moi aussi, je me joins à la ministre pour souhaiter une bonne journée franco-ontarienne à tout le monde. J'aimerais dire un merci spécial à Bryan Michaud, Carol Jolin, Peter Hominuk et Stewart Kiff, qui sont ici aujourd'hui. Le leadership de l'AFO nous a permis de vivre de très beaux moments aujourd'hui, que ce soit au déjeuner « French-ment bon ! », que ce soit à la levée du drapeau—on était à la pluie battante mais ça ne dérangeait pas; tout le monde était de bonne humeur—ou que ce soit au dévoilement du monument de la francophonie cet après-midi, cela a été une journée chargée d'émotions très positives.

Je remercie également la ministre déléguée aux services en français de nous avoir livré les priorités du

gouvernement conservateur face à la francophonie. Je dois dire que c'est la première fois, aujourd'hui, que je les entends. Du côté des néo-démocrates, on en partage plusieurs.

Si on commence avec la revue de la Loi sur les services en français, je suis contente de voir que c'est une des priorités. J'aurais aimé en savoir un peu plus. Est-ce qu'on aura un comité? Est-ce qu'il y aura des possibilités pour la communauté de partager ses attentes face à la revue de la loi? Quand est-ce que ça va commencer? Est-ce qu'on aura des échéances? Il n'y a rien de ça qui a été partagé. Mais au moins je sais que c'est sur sa liste de choses à faire. Ça me donne espoir.

Dans un deuxième temps, quelque chose que les néo-démocrates partagent également, c'est de mettre à jour le processus de désignation. La ministre est allée un petit peu plus loin, en disant qu'elle voulait un processus qui était moins bureaucratique. Je vous dirais, moins bureaucratique—mais on a également des règlements à changer.

Savez-vous, monsieur le Président, que tout ce dont on a besoin c'est qu'un élu municipal soit contre la désignation d'une région et il ne se passe rien? Demandez ce qui s'est passé à Oshawa, où pendant des années tout le monde était d'accord que la région d'Oshawa devrait être désignée, mais à cause d'un élu municipal, il ne s'est rien passé.

On doit changer les règlements pour vraiment donner à la communauté francophone le droit de désigner des endroits. Mais je vous dirais, amenez ça un pas plus loin : désignons la province de l'Ontario, puis on a fini une fois pour toutes dans le processus de désignation. Mais, en tout cas, c'est ça.

Ce qui m'amène à la troisième priorité que nous avons en commun avec le Parti conservateur : c'est au sujet de l'immigration. De se donner un but à atteindre de 5 % et de ne rien faire, bien, c'est de rêver en couleurs. On a besoin de voir quels sont les objectifs clairs : quand est-ce qu'on mesure pour s'assurer qu'on va arriver au 5 %?

Tous ceux qui ont lu le dernier rapport, *Se projeter*, se préparer, du commissaire aux services en français, M. François Boileau—chaque page de ce rapport-là crie l'urgence d'agir. Le poids démographique des francophones diminue chaque année. Il n'y a rien de bon qui sort pour l'Ontario si on ne change pas ce parcours-là. Que ce soit l'accès aux services, de garder ce qu'on a—tout ça est mis en cause si on n'atteint pas un minimum de 5 % d'immigration francophone. Encore là, la ministre l'a mis sur sa liste de choses à faire. Comment elle va s'y prendre? Est-ce qu'il y aura une possibilité pour les Ontariens and Ontariennes d'être entendus, de partager des solutions? J'aurais aimé qu'elle aille un peu plus loin, mais je remercie quand même qu'elle y ait touché.

Pour les néo-démocrates, c'est clair que si tu parles français et puis tu vis en Ontario, tu es Franco-Ontarien ou Franco-Ontarienne. Tu fais partie de la famille; on te dit bienvenue. Puis, viens fêter avec nous autres le 25. Mais, encore là, ça va seulement se passer si on voit un gouvernement qui en fait une priorité.

Cela ouvre la porte un peu au dossier de l'éducation, que la ministre a mentionné également. J'étais heureuse ce matin de voir que le Conseil scolaire Viamonde et le Conseil scolaire catholique MonAvenir étaient là, à la levée du drapeau. Mais tous les deux—quand je leur ai parlé, bien entendu—la première chose qu'ils ont dit : ils sont heureux de voir 5 % d'augmentation du nombre de leurs élèves, dans des écoles qui sont déjà pleines à craquer et dans des écoles qui ont déjà un, deux, trois, jusqu'à 12 portatifs parce qu'ils ont trop d'étudiants et étudiantes. Un gouvernement qui demande à tout le monde de faire des sacrifices, ça, ce n'est pas bon pour les Franco-Ontariens. Nos petits Franco-Ontariens et Franco-Ontariennes ont besoin d'écoles pour venir à bout de continuer de faire partie de la famille.

Bonne journée franco-ontarienne, monsieur le Président et à tout le monde. Et, à l'AFO, merci de nous avoir fait une si belle journée aujourd'hui.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): The time for responses has expired. We move on to petitions

PETITIONS

INJURED WORKERS

Ms. Rima Berns-McGown: I have a petition entitled "Workers' Comp Is a Right."

"Petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas about 200,000 to 300,000 people in Ontario are injured on the job every year;

"Whereas over a century ago, workers in Ontario who were injured on the job gave up the right to sue their employers, in exchange for a system that would provide them with just compensation;

"Whereas decades of cost-cutting have pushed injured workers into poverty and onto publicly funded social assistance programs, and have gradually curtailed the rights of injured workers;

"Whereas injured workers have the right to quality and timely medical care, compensation for lost wages, and protection from discrimination;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to change the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act to accomplish the following for injured workers in Ontario:

"Eliminate the practice of 'deeming' or 'determining,' which bases compensation on phantom jobs that injured workers do not actually have;

"Ensure that the WSIB prioritizes and respects the medical opinions of the health care providers who treat the injured worker directly;

"Prevent compensation from being reduced or denied based on 'pre-existing conditions' that never affected the worker's ability to function prior to the work injury."

I completely agree with this petition, will be signing my name and passing it along to page Erika to take to the Clerk.

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CURRICULUM

Ms. Laura Mae Lindo: I have a petition entitled "Protecting Children: Forward, Not Backward, on Sex Ed."

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the health and physical education curriculum empowers young people to make informed decisions about relationships and their bodies;

"Whereas gender-based violence, gender inequality, unintended pregnancies, 'sexting,' and HIV and other sexually transmitted infections (STIs) pose serious risks to the safety and well-being of young people;

"Whereas one in three women and one in six men experience sexual violence in Canada, and a lack of age-appropriate education about sexual health and healthy relationships leaves children and youth vulnerable to exploitation;

"Whereas one in five parents reported their own child being a victim of cyberbullying; and

"Whereas Doug Ford and the Conservative government is dragging Ontario backwards, requiring students to learn an outdated sex ed curriculum that excludes information about consent, sexual orientation, gender identity, sexting, cyberbullying and safe and healthy relationships;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to direct the Ministry of Education to continue the use of the 2015 health and physical education curriculum in schools and move Ontario forward, not backwards."

I fully support this petition and will affix my name to it.

INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS

Mr. Kevin Yarde: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Ontario is situated on the traditional territory of Indigenous peoples, many of whom have been on this land for at least 12,000 years;

"Whereas in 2015 the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada released its final report: 'Honouring the Truth, Reconciling for the Future' which made 94 recommendations or 'Calls to Action' for the government of Canada;

"Whereas reconciliation must be at the centre of all government decision-making;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to:

"—continue reconciliation work in Ontario by implementing the recommendations of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission;

"—reinstate the Ministry of Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation;

"—work with First Nations leaders to sign co-operative government-to-government accords;

"—support TRC education and community development (e.g. TRC summer writing sessions);

“—support Indigenous communities across the province (e.g. cleaning up Grassy Narrows).”

I support this petition. I will endorse it and sign it and give it to page Simon.

SOCIAL ASSISTANCE

Mr. Mike Schreiner: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly from my constituents on the Basic Income Pilot.

“Whereas the Progressive Conservative Party has promised to continue the Basic Income Pilot during the 2018 election campaign;

“Whereas there has been no indication that the Basic Income Pilot was not working to lift people out of poverty and the government refuses to release any official economic analysis or facts to support the elimination of the program;

“Whereas basic income programs have received support from across the political spectrum and from esteemed economists as a financially responsible and effective way to eliminate poverty;

“Whereas people in Ontario on ODSP and Ontario Works are currently living far below the poverty line;

“Whereas the cancellation of the Basic Income Pilot will damage the lives of our most vulnerable citizens and end up costing us more in health care, policing and emergency services.

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to restore the Basic Income Pilot program.”

I support this petition and will sign it and ask page Martin to take it to the Clerk’s table.

GUIDE AND SERVICE ANIMALS

Mrs. Gila Martow: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

“Whereas Ontario Regulation 429/07 under the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 indicates, ‘If a person with a disability is accompanied by a guide dog or other service animal, the provider of goods or services shall ensure that the person is permitted to enter the premises with the animal and to keep the animal with him or her unless the animal is otherwise excluded by law from the premises;’ and

“Whereas the Ontario Human Rights Code speaks to the ‘duty to accommodate persons with disabilities ... in a manner that most respects the dignity of the person;’ and

“Whereas, despite these provisions, many who require, have been medically recommended for and own professional, trained service dogs, including children with autism, PTSD sufferers and others, continue to be denied access to public places; and

“Whereas service dogs perform a series of vital tasks to support those living with disabilities, including serving in guidance, seizure response, mobility assistance, autism and PTSD support, among other medically acknowledged services; and

“Whereas there are cases where children who rely on a service dog are not allowed to bring them to school; and

“Whereas ongoing denial of access means those requiring service dogs are continuing to face further hurdles beyond the impacts of disability to be allowed the public accommodations they deserve;

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

“Open access to registered service dogs and owners:

“Reintroduce the Ontario Service Dog Act, to end continued discrimination and ensure those requiring service dogs are no longer denied the essential public access they should already be guaranteed.”

I’m affixing my signature and giving it to page Simon.

CURRICULUM

Ms. Bhutla Karpoche: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas all students deserve access to comprehensive health and physical education;

“Whereas the current curriculum was created and written by experts in child development and Internet safety, police and social workers in consultation with approximately 4,000 parents;

“Whereas the current curriculum teaches students about a wide range of topics including healthy eating, personal safety and injury protection, substance abuse, addictions and related behaviours, human development and sexual health ... and consent;

“Whereas the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization ... 2018 study on sexuality education states that comprehensive health and physical education have positive effects, including ‘increasing young people’s knowledge and improving their attitudes related to sexual and reproductive health behaviours’;

“Therefore, we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly to keep Ontario’s health and physical education curriculum ... in its current form.”

I fully support this petition and will be affixing my signature to it.

NORTHERN HEALTH SERVICES

M^{me} France Gélinas: I would like to thank Mrs. Sharron Murdock from my riding in Nickel Belt for this petition. It reads as follows:

“Save the Breast Screening and Assessment Service....

“Whereas Premier Doug Ford promised that there would not be cuts to nurses’ positions; and

“Whereas in Sudbury we have already lost 70 nurses, and Health Sciences North is closing part of the Breast Screening and Assessment Service; and

“Whereas cuts to the Sudbury Breast Screening and Assessment Service will result in longer wait times, which is very stressful for women diagnosed with breast cancer; and

“Whereas cuts to the Sudbury Breast Screening and Assessment Service will only take us backwards;”

They “petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to: “Provide adequate funding to Health Sciences North to ensure northerners have equitable access to life-saving programs such as the Breast Screening and Assessment Service.”

I fully support this petition, will affix my name to it and ask page Aaliyah to bring it to the Clerk.

EMPLOYMENT STANDARDS

Ms. Jill Andrew: I stand proudly in support of Fight for \$15 and Fairness, and residents from our Toronto–St. Paul’s riding.

“Petition to the Ontario Legislative Assembly.

“Don’t Take Away Our \$15 Minimum Wage and Fairer Labour Laws.

“Whereas the vast majority of Ontarians support a \$15 minimum wage and better laws to protect workers; and

“Whereas last year, in response to overwhelming popular demand by the people of Ontario, the provincial government brought in legislation and regulations that:

“Deliver 10 personal emergency leave days for all workers, the first two of which are paid;

“Make it illegal to pay part-time, temporary, casual or contract workers less than their full-time or directly hired co-workers, including equal public holiday pay and vacation pay;

“Raised the adult general minimum wage to \$14 per hour and further raises it to a \$15 minimum wage on January 1, 2019, with annual adjustments by Ontario’s consumer price index;

“Make it easier to join unions, especially for workers in the temporary help, home care, community services and building services sectors;

“Make client companies responsible for workplace health and safety for temporary agency employees;

“Provide strong enforcement through the hiring of an additional 175 employment standards officers;

“Will ensure workers have modest improvements in the scheduling of their hours, including:

“—three hours’ pay when workers are expected to be on call all day, but are not called into work;

“—three hours’ pay for any employee whose shift is cancelled with less than two days’ notice; and

“—the right to refuse shifts without penalty if the shift is scheduled with fewer than four days’ notice;

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“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to honour these commitments, including the \$15 minimum wage and fairer scheduling rules set to take effect on January 1, 2019. We further call on the assembly to take all necessary steps to enforce these laws and extend them to ensure no worker is left without protection.”

I sign this proudly and I hand it to my page, Justine.

SCHOOL BOARDS

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Further petitions? The member for Algoma–Manitoulin.

Mr. Michael Mantha: Thank you, Speaker, and I must say, you look very dashing. It’s the first time I’ve seen you in your new attire.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the Ministry of Education oversees all school boards in the province of Ontario and as such there is an immediate need for a ministerial investigation and oversight of the Rainbow District School Board for serious contraventions contrary to the Ontario Education Act, Ontario Clean Water Act, 2006, municipal freedom of information and rights to privacy act, Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms and the Ontario Human Rights Code; and

“Whereas the Rainbow District School Board, by failing to adhere to the Ontario Clean Water Act and by failing to permanently remedy the unsafe levels of lead contamination in school drinking water (33 schools), are placing our students and educators at serious risk of lead poisoning; and

“Whereas the malfeasance, systemic discrimination, abuse of power, abuse of process, excessive pay increases, incurring large legal fees to defend their malfeasance, as well as unauthorized redundant spending by the Rainbow District School Board and school administration have taken money out of the classrooms and thus have created significant negative impact on students, parents, families and the community;

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

“To commence an immediate detailed ministerial investigation and oversight of the Rainbow District School Board, as well as a complete financial audit of school board spending since 2010, including exuberant pay increases to be conducted by the office of the provincial auditor, and detailed reports of findings to be submitted to the Ontario Legislature.”

On behalf of the good parents of Algoma–Manitoulin, I sign this petition.

ANIMAL PROTECTION

Ms. Rima Berns-McGown: I have a petition from a constituent, Leanne Baker, who is passionate about animal rights.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the tethering of dogs causes both physical (e.g., dehydration, starvation, throat damage) and psychological (e.g., depression, neuroses, aggressiveness) effects detrimental to a dog’s health and well-being and leaves them vulnerable to attack by humans and other animals;

“Whereas chained dogs must eat, sleep, urinate and defecate in a single confined area;

“Whereas these dogs swelter and suffer from heatstroke in the summer, freeze and die from hypothermia in the winter, and their necks become raw and infected from constant rubbing;

“Whereas numerous US states have banned the tethering of dogs; and

“Whereas research shows that tethering causing dogs to be afraid, territorial and aggressive;

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

“That the government ban all unattended tethering of dogs including working dogs and sled dogs at all times on public and private property.”

I agree with this petition and will be affixing my name to it and passing it to page Patrick to take to the Clerk.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): I beg to inform the House that, pursuant to standing order 98(c), changes have been made to the order of precedence on the ballot list for private members' public business such that Ms. Kusendova assumes ballot item number 90, Mrs. Martow assumes ballot item number 26, Ms. Mitas assumes ballot item number 23 and Ms. Hogarth assumes ballot item number 49.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

SELECT COMMITTEE ON FINANCIAL TRANSPARENCY

Resuming the debate adjourned on September 25, 2018, on the amendment to the motion regarding the appointment of a Select Committee on Financial Transparency.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): I believe the member from Timmins has the floor.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I want to pick up where I left off this morning. You're going to have to pardon me; I've got a stay that's kind of not working on this collar, so if you see it pop, everybody point, so I can put it back down. Point—just go like that if you want to throw me off.

I want to start off, first of all, in the context of what the government is trying to do here. It is true that the previous Liberal government did do some things that—really, you had to scratch your head. They were, for some reason—well, we know the reasons, but for different reasons, they were trying to account for their spending in, I would say, a creative way. I'll just leave it there, because I need to be parliamentary, Speaker.

The government utilized accounting methods that allowed them to off-book some of the costs that they had in a way that didn't show up on the government budget and didn't show up on the books for that year: how they accounted for pensions and how they accounted for the hydro changes. As we all know, first with the Conservatives and then with the Liberals, they privatized a huge part of our generation side and then half of our distribution side, which raised the price of hydro beyond what people could afford. The government had to try to find some way to reduce hydro prices before the next election, in hopes that people would calm down, because people were hopping mad over hydro rates. They off-booked that cost by

moving it over through the IESO, through a different financing method.

I think the government is right. We don't disagree with the government that the previous Liberal government did some things that, quite frankly, were questionable when it came to the accounting practices here in the Legislature. I do want to point out that the government used those accounting practices themselves under Mike Harris and Ernie Eves. I was here when some of those accounting practices were used by the Mike Harris government and by the Eves government in order to be able to off-book some of their expenses, because part of the problem they had is that they had a fairly large deficit. They seem to forget that when they were in government for those two terms, they ran deficits for the better part of the time that they were in office. They needed to find ways to be able to reduce the deficit number so that they could be seen as slaying the deficit. So the government under Mike Harris and then under Premier Eves off-booked some stuff as well.

Let's put this into context. Was that practice correct? No. I believe, and New Democrats believe, and as Andrea Horwath has said over and over, we have to be fully transparent in what we do here in this Legislature and what the executive, through the government, does in Cabinet when it comes to how we account for our spending.

People out there work hard every day in order to try to make a living for their families. They give a good part of that cheque to us here in the Legislature so that we can socialize the costs of things like health care, education, roads, subways and many other services that we rely on. People are prepared to accept paying those taxes to the degree that they do if they have confidence that the government is spending the money in a way that is accountable, that is transparent and is completely above board.

If you're straight with the public—you may have a discussion about, “Well, maybe that service over there shouldn't be as robust as that service over there,” but there are some things that are very basic. People want to send their kids to school. They don't want to have to pay for that. They want to make sure that their kids have access to post-secondary education, and as young adults they want that as well. People want to make sure that if you get sick, you don't have to take your credit card and go into debt in order to go to the hospital or the doctor to get well. All of those things cost money. I think, Mr. Speaker, as you do, that the public is prepared to accept that as long as we're transparent in the way that we deal with the finances of Ontario and, first of all, how we report our expenditures.

The public threw the Liberals out of office partly because of that—because they saw the scandal under Ornge, where there was more than \$1 billion spent that didn't need to be spent. What was worse was that the government was trying to hide that spending, and it took a committee in order to be able to uncover what was going on—a committee of the opposition New Democrats and then opposition Conservatives—to show that.

E-health: Do you remember that one, Mr. Speaker? Great idea. Nobody is going to fault the government of the day under the Liberals for trying to digitize our medical

record system. I think it makes perfectly good sense that if you walk into the doctor's office, you walk into the medical clinic or you happen to be in an emergency, there's some mechanism where you're able to get all of that information electronically so that physicians and nurses and whoever else is in the system can do a better job. And it saves us money. It's an investment in the future, because how many people end up with multiple prescriptions and multiple diagnoses that cost the system a lot of money? So nobody—I don't think the Conservatives, and certainly not us as New Democrats—faults the previous government for wanting to move towards eHealth. But, again, it was a boondoggle. It ended up costing way over what the government said it was going to cost, and then they were trying to say, "No, that didn't cost all that much money." And they tried to off-book some of that by being somewhat creative as well.

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Then came the gas plants. We all remember the gas plants scandal. We had a couple of ridings where the Liberals were in trouble with the building of what they called non-utility generators, gas-fired power plants, in two communities around the GTA. They recognized that the public was hopping mad about having these great big generators built within their neighbourhoods. Rightfully so, the public kicked back. And do you know what? That's the right of the public. They're the ones who are paying the bill at the end.

I agree, as a New Democrat—and I don't think there's one New Democrat in this House who would disagree—that we should take our lead from the public sometimes when it comes to the decision of how you site these things.

The government decided, after they signed the contracts and the shovels were in the ground and they were constructing these facilities, to cancel them just before an election. Why? Because there were a couple of Liberal seats that were in danger. I sat on the—that's why they did it; we'll talk about the committee after. Then the government said, "Oh, well, it's not that bad. It's only going to cost"—I think they said \$35 million for the cancellation. I didn't know very much, and I'm sure that most opposition members didn't know very much about what was in those contracts, but we certainly smelled that there was something going on. There was rotten cheese in Denmark that day. We knew that there's no way you're going to cancel two big power plants like that, that are probably worth \$100 million each—maybe not that much, but worth quite a bit of money, for \$30 million in penalties.

Can you imagine that if you signed a contract with me and I cancel your contract halfway through and you've expended, let's say, a whole bunch of money to start construction, and then you lose future revenue, and it affects the ability of your business to do what it is that you've got to do to keep yourself healthy?

So we suspected there was something. At that point, because there was a minority government, New Democrats and Conservatives worked together to call before the committee the minister of the day. The Honourable Chris Bentley was the Minister of Energy. The minister refused to

give us the documents. Do you remember that? We sat in that committee and we said, "You have to give us the documents. A standing committee has the authority to order documents and for witnesses to appear, and if you don't, you're in contempt of the Legislature." He chose and Mr. McGuinty chose the route of contempt, rather than disclose the numbers. That's when we knew that there was something going on. The government ended up refusing to give the documents. There was a motion of contempt brought to the House. The House voted that there was contempt. And what did the Premier do? The Premier resigned as a way to get around it, so that the committee didn't have to sit the way that it should.

We were lucky enough to design the motion in such a way that the committee did sit. And what did we find, Mr. Speaker? \$1.1 billion.

Mr. Michael Mantha: How much?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Some \$1.1 billion that the Liberals spent in order to be able to try to cancel a couple of gas plants, because they were trying to save a couple of seats. Well, those are two very expensive seats, I must say. If we did not at that point have a minority Parliament and the ability to control what happened on that committee, the government, by majority, would have refused to give us those documents, and the opposition—Conservatives, New Democrats—could have done what they wanted. The government would have used its majority to deny us that right. Eventually, we might have been able to FOI some of that stuff, but in the end, the committee was able to do it. And lo and behold, we found out through all of these hearings, looking at the mountains and mountains of documents, that the government's claim that was, first of all, \$30 million in costs—and then it was \$55 million in costs, then they started talking about hundreds of millions. It ended up being \$1.1 billion.

That's why the public got so mad at the Liberals. They got mad at the Liberals because they privatized the hydro system—something they said they would never do. People understood that it drove electricity prices up. And then they started doing things like what they did with the gas plants, where they were trying to hide the numbers so that this House and the public wouldn't know. And I'll tell you, the public is a lot smarter than we politicians give them credit for sometimes, because the public understood there was a problem. The government suffered for that in this last election. The Conservative members can say all they want that they formed the majority government because they had no platform and they had a leader. The reason the Conservatives got elected was that people were so mad at the Liberals that they were doing everything they could not to elect Liberals. The result of the election, I think, shows that quite starkly. You have the Liberals here that are now with seven seats and no official party status. That's what led to them being there.

Now the government comes forward with this particular motion and says, "Well, we need to take a look at it. We have to find out exactly what it is that the government did," and, rightfully so, are using a committee—in this case, a select committee—in order to be able to investigate

this particular situation. Now, I hope that the government stays focused on doing what's right and we don't get into a witch hunt on this thing, but I can understand why they're doing it. They want to use the committee as a way of being able to get at the numbers, to see the documents and to call the witnesses to really figure out what happened. I guess an argument could be made that doing so creates a situation where future governments, including this government, may decide never to go down that road again, because do you know what the biggest deterrent to crime is, Mr. Speaker? The fear of getting caught. That's the biggest deterrent. Will you speed on the highway if you know there's photo radar, if it existed? Will you speed on a highway if you know the police are at a certain intersection? People don't want to get caught. People do break laws. It's the same thing with governments.

If the government is doing this—I hope; we'll see. I want to hear more of this debate before we land exactly on how we're going to deal with this. But if the government is doing this in order to be able to ring the bell, to show the evidence, so that no future government and present government would be prepared to go there and do what the Liberals did, I can understand why the government would bring that motion forward.

Now, here's where I'm at. The government has their motion, and this particular motion creates the select committee. That's a perfectly legitimate thing to do. Select committees have been used to great effect. I remember the select committee on mental health. We did some wonderful work at that committee—in this case, it was the idea of the current finance minister, and France Gélinas was in on that as well—in order to look at mental health issues and then come back with some report. Unfortunately, not a lot came out of it, and let's hope that this government takes those reports a lot more seriously. I certainly hope that is going to be the case, because we all understand—you know from a personal perspective and I know from a personal perspective that mental health is a real issue in our society. My sister was schizophrenic and suicidal, and I had to deal with pretty traumatic things with my sister over the years. We all have family members who have disabilities and various issues, and we need to make sure that we take the best care we can of those citizens who are most in need. Let's hope that's where this goes.

But my point is that the government is bringing forward this select committee and they're saying, "Let the government, by way of six members, and let the official opposition, by way of three members, have a nine-member committee, which is what the standing orders called for, where the government will chair the committee and we will have the ability to utilize the committee process, structures and the laws of how committees are run in a way to be able to look into this." I don't think that's a bad thing, depending on—I want to hear a little bit more of the debate about where the government is going with this.

But there's a problem with this motion. If you read the motion carefully, the government is in complete control of what happens here. Selection of witnesses, just as one example, is important on committee. I know there are a

number of members on my side of the House, as there are plenty of members on the other side of the House, who have never sat on a committee before. But those returning members who have been here a couple of terms or one term or longer, such as myself and a couple of other members who have been here since 1990, will know that committees can do some really good work. We've often had situations where the government may not have been happy having a certain witness come forward, but bringing that witness forward has actually helped us better understand what it is that the committee is looking at.

There are all kinds of examples in the select committee on mental health, for example. There was a process that one member could refuse—how did it go? There was a unanimity clause when it came to how we called witnesses forward. All of the members of the committee were equal, basically, is what you were trying to do with that motion.

There are cases where we say "by standing order" or "by order of the committee," or sometimes "by order of the House," where each of the parties has the ability to choose witnesses on a rotation. We've done that before, where we say, "Oh, there are enough spots for 10 people to come forward." You go around and you each pick one until you exhaust the list of who's going to take the spots. That way, everybody gets an opportunity to make sure they have their witnesses come forward. The way this particular motion is written, the government is reserving the right to control who comes to the committee by way of its majority.

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Now, I know somebody in the government is going to get up and say, "Oh, no, that's not our intention." I'll be pulling that Hansard the first time you refuse one of our witnesses. Because it is, I think, wrong if you're going to create any type of committee, especially a select committee, and you don't give members on the committee equal opportunity to be able to call witnesses. So one of the amendments that we've put forward is to give every member of that committee equal right to be able to call witnesses, and I think that's a good thing. Democracy means that everybody should participate, and if the government is truly serious about wanting to work with the opposition and challenging the opposition to work with them, I think you need to start showing how you're able to work with us.

For example, earlier today, Mr. Speaker, you will know that the government introduced a motion to change the sitting time of the House tomorrow. We have House leaders' meetings here on Thursdays. House leaders talk to each other every day. So the government should have come to us last Thursday and said, "By the way, we've done the math. We want to run time allocation on the debate we're in now on Thursday morning, and I need to sit the House an extra hour." The government could have said that to us. At least we could have prepared and we would have known—because you would have done it anyway. But no, the government sits back, waits 10 minutes—five minutes, literally, before the time that the motion is brought to the

House, and says, “Oh, by the way, we want to do this because we want to work extra hours.”

As I said in the debate earlier, I’m not opposed and New Democrats aren’t opposed to being in here till midnight, after midnight or whenever it is that we’ve got to sit to do the people’s business. But you can’t run a business that way, let alone a Legislature. Imagine you’re a small parts manufacturer and you’ve got people on shift, and all of a sudden you start changing people’s shifts at the last minute. Employees are going to be pretty upset and are going to be running to sign a union card pretty darn fast in order to get a collective agreement to be able to control their hours of work. Well, we’re not rushing to sign onto a union here in the Legislature because we’re not allowed to do that. As members of the assembly, we’re prohibited. But my point is, you can’t do this kind of thing without some form of co-operation between the parties.

This government can say all they want, that they want to reach across the aisle and work with the opposition, the official opposition and others, to be able to move their agenda forward, and then do these kinds of things where they write a motion that says, “Well, you know what? We reserve the right to control all the people who appear before this committee.”

That’s why, on behalf of the Andrea Horwath, I move, as the official opposition House leader, an amendment to the motion that says, “Each member of committee will be treated equally.” If there are witnesses to be called, members have that right. We can work out the details in committee—you know, rotate the way that we normally do or whatever. I hope the government is going to support that amendment.

Interjection.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Well, you didn’t move this motion until sometime after, so that’s a whole other issue.

I would just say that if the government is serious about working with us, then the government should have come to us ahead of time and said, “We have this particular committee that we would like to strike, and here’s what we’d like to do.” I found out about the committee being struck when your government House leader called me literally 10 minutes before you guys announced it. That’s when I found out about it, and I’m the opposition House leader. There was no consultation with the official opposition or anybody else.

I don’t argue for a second—I don’t want members on the other side thinking that I don’t believe you have the right to do this. You have every right to do this. You’re the government. You have the right to call what’s on the order paper, and you decide what goes on the order paper. If you want that motion, you have the right to do so. Nobody is arguing that you don’t have the right. But what you have an obligation to do, I believe, is to be up front with the opposition and say, “Here’s what we would like to do. How can we do this in a way that will satisfy some of your concerns?”

We, as the official opposition, are saying that we might in the end agree with what you’re trying to do here. We may very well support this at the end. We still need to have

a few discussions at our end, because I think what you’re trying to do—generally, we could understand why you’re doing it, but you don’t come at the last minute, as you did this week, call the House leader 10 minutes before you’re going to have a press conference in order to announce a motion that you’re going to be moving in the House, and you don’t come to me as the official opposition House leader five minutes before you’re going to change the hours of the House and say, “By the way, here’s the motion.” A private business doesn’t run that way, and a lot of you who ran businesses know you couldn’t survive as a business running that way. If you have—

Interjections.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I was a business person. I owned my own business. I ran a business. I know what it’s like. My point is, you have to have certain considerations when you’re the employer or the boss or, in this case, the government in the Legislature. You have to give people fair notice and there has to be some discussion, because you know what? You may get surprised. There may be things the government and the opposition can agree on. I challenge you to go take a look at the voting record of the last Parliament. You’ll be surprised when you find out how often everybody voted for what.

Mr. Michael Mantha: Oh, they’re quiet. Look at how quiet they got. They don’t want to look at that record.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Oh, Steve, my good friend the Minister of Municipal Affairs, just realized what I was saying.

The point is, I would say that the government has an obligation to be able to work with the opposition, and then they can make a decision. If the opposition says, “Well, no, we’re not going to co-operate with you,” then the government has the right to do what it is they’ve got to do. And we may have complaints; we may oppose it. That’s fair. That’s the way the Legislature works. But you at least have an obligation, I believe, and a responsibility as a government who says it wants to be fair, that you want to govern for the people and you want the opposition to work with you, to at least give us a chance to work with you. You may find out quite by surprise that there are some things we might be able to agree on.

That’s the first amendment, Mr. Speaker, that we moved. Actually, the second amendment we moved is the amendment in regard to making sure that every individual member has the right to be able to call witnesses. The other amendment that we put forward, I want to explain. I’m sure the government understands it, but for those people watching back home, Mr. Speaker, our other amendment essentially says—the motion of the government, the main motion, says we’re going to look at everything in the rear-view mirror. We’re going to look at everything in the past, only what the Liberals have done. Well, there’s a Parliament sitting today. Some of the things that the government has done in the past, prior to the last election, are things that this government is having to deal with because you have to live with the consequences of those decisions. Some of the decisions you’re making are pretty tough ones, because the government did put you in a spot. I understand the spot you’re in, because the last time the

Liberals were in office, they did the same thing to us. Mr. Peterson ran on a surplus budget of \$300 million. We got elected, we opened the books, and it was an \$8.5-billion deficit. So I know the feeling. I know exactly what it feels like. When the Liberals ran and defeated Mr. Eves in his election, Mr. Eves had also misstated the numbers somewhat and it was a higher deficit than had been reported. So all of us here who have sat in government, from government to opposition or the other way, have seen this thing before.

We have an amendment that says the committee has to widen its scope somewhat so that we're able to look at how the government dealt with those decisions, because the government previous of Premier Wynne made some really bad decisions. We agree with the government. Man, there were some really bad decisions made by that government around hydro, about underfunding our health care system, more privatization in the health care system etc. With a lot of those decisions, the pigeons came home to roost, as they say, on election night.

But this government has had to deal now with those decisions. How can this committee properly deal with what happened if the scope of the committee doesn't allow us to look at how it's being dealt with now? Every decision that this government is making since June 7—or since they got sworn in later on in June; I think it was June 25—is affected by what the Liberals did. So we need to have an ability, as a committee, to look at those decisions so that we can properly inform ourselves and say, "Here are the things that shouldn't be done in the future."

The government has a majority on the committee, so they will end up being able to control the report and the recommendations. I understand that. They're going to have five voting members to the NDP's three voting members. So you will get your way in the end, but at least you've got to be transparent.

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If the current government purports to be the government of the people, you can't be the government of the people when the only people you care about are yourselves. By not allowing the scope of this motion to be expanded, it's really about you coming out with the result that you're looking for without any transparency. You will get what you want in the end, because you're a majority—we understand that—but there needs to be transparency in the process.

So I say to the government across the way, I certainly hope that you will support our two amendments. We haven't heard from you yet on that. I had a quick chat with the government House leader earlier today and I had a quick chat with the Premier as well. I don't know where they're at—they didn't say yes, they didn't say no—but I can tell you that New Democrats are prepared to work on this in a serious way so that we can prevent what happened from happening again.

As I said earlier in the debate, the best way to prevent somebody from breaking the law is making them think that they may get caught, and this committee could have that

effect if it's properly done. So I just say to the government I think it's a fairly important point.

I want to get to some of the politics around this thing, Mr. Speaker, because I listened earlier to our good friend the Minister of Finance, who said a couple of things that I thought were rather interesting. The first thing is, he was trying to act shocked and surprised at the deficit numbers, saying, "Oh, they reported \$3.4 billion but it's really \$15 billion. Oh, my God, we were shocked. We just couldn't believe it. Like, where did that come from?"

Mr. Michael Mantha: Where was he in April of—

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Well, I've got some Hansard quotes here. I really, really love Hansard; it's one of the nicest tools that we have as members. May 2, 2018—oh, my God, that's just before the election got called. This is straight from Hansard: Mr. Vic Fedeli.

Mr. Michael Mantha: He was here?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: He was here.

"My question is for the Premier. Well, another week, and another damning report is out on the government's faulty fiscal record. This time, we hear the truth from the Financial Accountability Office. The FAO agrees with the Auditor General. They, too, forecast a \$12-billion deficit..."

So on May 2 we've got the then Fedeli Focus on Finance telling us that there's a \$12-billion deficit, according to what the FAO—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): The member will refer to another member by his riding as opposed to his last name. Thank you.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Mr. Speaker, I was only trying to increase the sales of that wonderful book, five editions that he wrote. That's all I was trying to do. What can I do to help?

Mr. Michael Mantha: What edition was it?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: It was the fifth.

But clearly, on May 2, barely days before the election got called, the then critic for finance from the Conservative Party, Mr. Fedeli, the member from Nipissing—I think it's Nipissing, right—said the FAO and the Auditor General forecast a \$12-billion deficit at that point. That was at the beginning of May, so you've had May, you've had June, you've had July, you've had August and now almost all of September. Are we surprised it's at \$15 billion? It was \$12 billion in May and there has been money spent since then, so you darn well know that the deficit numbers were going to be increased.

We've got the Minister of Finance, back in the time that he was in opposition, on May 2, saying, and I quote from Hansard, "They, too, forecast a \$12-billion deficit for 2018-19, twice what the government has said the deficit will be. The government did not slay the deficit, as they claimed. In fact," says Mr. Fedeli, "the only thing they've slayed is any shred of trust or credibility. The government told us one thing, when both legislative officers told us the truth, which happens to be a completely different picture."

Hon. Steve Clark: The Liberals aren't here to defend themselves.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Well, that is an interesting—I think I scared them away. We know what that was about, but we won't tell everybody else.

But for the government to come in here and act surprised, as they did—was it Monday or Tuesday that they announced this?

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Friday.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: No, the creation of the committee—Monday or Tuesday, whatever day it was, and on Friday to say, “Oh, my God, we're so surprised. Where did this come from?” It's a bit of a stretch. All they had to do was to go to Hansard on May 2, 2018, and Mr. Fedeli, in his own words, would have told us exactly what we spent \$1 million on: a consultant, who happens to be a former Liberal Premier of British Columbia, to go out and to tell us what we already knew.

What a bad waste of taxpayers' dollars. Imagine what we could have done with a million dollars in any one of our ridings. I'm sure there's a road to be fixed or there's a school heating system to be fixed. I'm sure that there are health care investments we could have made. There are all kinds of things. Those are the things that drive people into the deep end. When we use the word “billions,” I think most of the public goes, “Billions? What the heck is that?” They can't even refer to what a billion is. But if you say to people \$100,000 or \$1 million, people understand what that means. When they see governments frittering away \$100,000 here and \$1 million there, they say, “Well, that's not very good use of my money.”

So now we have a Conservative government, which purports to be fiscally responsible, worried about the taxpayers and not wanting to indebt our future generations, wasting \$1 million to hire a former Liberal Premier to come and tell us what the member from Nipissing told us on May 2 of this year. What a waste of money.

Mr. Michael Mantha: He could have copied and pasted.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: The member from Manitoulin makes a very good point: He could have copied and pasted from Hansard what the Minister of Finance said when he was in opposition on May 2 and made that the report. It would have been free. Hansard did it; we already paid for it.

Mr. Robert Bailey: You didn't believe him.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: What do you mean you didn't believe him? You didn't believe your own finance minister? My God. Come on, of course we believed it. We understood the government was cooking the books.

Mr. Michael Mantha: Give him an edition of Focus on Finance.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Yes. I've got to get myself another Fedeli Focus on Finance and send it over there. I'm sure I can find a signed copy somewhere around here.

Then, on May 7—this is even closer to the election. You can't make this stuff up, Speaker; you just can't. This is again the then critic for finance from Nipissing, Mr. Fedeli, the now finance minister. He said, “But we heard more from RBC Economics Research. They prepared a sobering budget report entitled Deficits by Choice. It's

interesting, because this ties in a lot to what the Auditor General and primarily what the Financial Accountability Office just told us. This is by choice. This government has told us that they are going to run a \$6.7-billion deficit by choice. Well, that is absolutely wrong. That is absolutely not true in two aspects. Number one, the Financial Accountability Officer said, ‘No, that's not true. It's not a \$6.7-billion deficit this year. First of all, it's \$12 billion.’”

So on May 7, we got the then finance critic for the Conservatives accepting that there was a \$12-billion deficit that the government was trying to hide and report as a \$6.7-billion deficit.

Then, in the previous budget in 2017—they're acting surprised. The government said, “We have a balanced budget.” I sat in this House and I listened to the member from Timiskaming–Cochrane, who was our financial critic at the time. I listened to the then finance critic for the Conservatives, the member from Nipissing, get in this House, go to public accounts and wail about how the budget was not balanced, that the government was trying to say there was a \$600-million surplus when in fact—

Mr. Robert Bailey: We were right.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Of course we were right. We knew we were right back then, to the member from Sarnia–Lambton. Is it Sarnia–Lambton? Good, I got it right. See, Mr. Speaker? Two ridings I got right today. No. Three and four—I got four right today, Mr. Speaker. I'm improving.

My point is, we in the opposition at the time, both New Democrats and Conservatives, said, “We don't buy what the Liberals are reporting in their books.” They were trying to say that they've got a surplus, and we knew that wasn't the case. So we went to public accounts—and I believe it was my good friend the member from Nickel Belt who was on public accounts at the time—and we got the Auditor General to agree that in fact the budget wasn't balanced, because what the government was doing was counting the same money twice. They were taking what was a billion dollars, if I remember correctly, which was their—what did they call that again? The billion-dollar rainy day fund. You put money aside in case you're over—

Interjection.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: They were using the contingency fund. That's right. Then they moved \$600 million of it in order to be able to hide the deficit that they had.

So how can you be surprised? I don't understand how the government could say with a straight face at the press conference on Friday, then at the press conference this week, and again in the House today, “Oh, my God, nobody saw this coming. We didn't think it was as bad as this.” Well, I refer to May 7 of this year and to May 2 of this year, when the current Minister of Finance, who was the finance critic, himself said it was at least \$12 billion, based on what the auditor was saying at the time.

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And we've had about four or five months go through, so of course it's at \$15 billion. Every month you spend more money, so it goes up.

Is that to say that I agree that the \$15 billion is a good thing? Absolutely not. There's not a New Democrat in the

House or a New Democrat in the land who thinks that debt and deficit is a good thing. I think we all understand, as Conservatives, Liberals and New Democrats, that at times governments have to run deficits. For example, the Stephen Harper Conservative government ran some of the largest deficits that we've ever seen in the history of Canada. They had the largest deficits in the time that they were in office than any federal government since.

Interjection.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I'm getting to that.

The member from Sarnia-Lambton says, "Yes, we were in an economic situation where it had to be dealt with," and I agree. There are times when governments have to run a deficit because the choice is stark: Shut down the hospital at home; stop cleaning the snow on your highway; shut the school where your kids go; shut the university down the road. There are sometimes some very stark decisions. The government reported \$6.7 billion, and it turned out to be \$15 billion. There are decisions that governments need to make at times in order to maintain public services.

What I think the Liberals did wrong—and this is where we are, as New Democrats—is that I think the government, especially the Liberal government, wasn't very good at managing their decisions about how they spent money. They wasted and frittered away all kinds of dollars on things like eHealth, on things like the Ornge helicopter scandal, on things like the gas plant committee and others. We can sit here, and we can make a list, and we can talk about it all day. They made some very bad decisions that punted the costs to the future by increasing the deficit.

I believe, as a New Democrat, that any dollar I have to pay on debt is a dollar that I can't pay on a program that is necessary in our community. I want to make sure that, as much as possible, we do everything we can to get to balance. Can you get to balance right away? Probably not. I would believe this government is going to have a hard time getting to balance given some of the choices that they've made already.

We know it's going to be around a \$15-billion deficit. The government has cut its own revenue by cancelling cap-and-trade revenue, cancelling their own revenue when they reduced the price of gas—the gas tax. They've already cancelled a host of other programs that were revenue that was used to do good things like greening our economy and making sure that people are able to lessen their reliance on carbon-type fuels. All of that has a price tag.

So you don't have a lot of choices. If you have a \$15-billion deficit, you either borrow more money, you cut services or you raise taxes. There's nobody in this Legislature who has an appetite to raise taxes. I don't want to raise taxes. I say that categorically as a New Democrat. That's the last thing you want to do. You want to manage what you've got more effectively. You want to do a good job of running the health care system, the education system and others so that we're frugal with our dollars and we make sure that we deliver services in a way that is economic.

There are times when we're going to have to make a decision on taxes. It's a question of what decision you want to make. New Democrats say the middle class is paying enough. We have shifted the burden of taxation from those who have the most money in our economy to those people who make less. If you look at the percentage of who is paying the taxes, it's the middle class. It's people from \$25,000 up to \$100,000 and \$110,000 a year combined income, and families, who are paying the lion's share of all taxes—paying that on their housing taxes, paying that on their income taxes, on consumption taxes and the rest.

What you end up with is a 1% at the top—maybe 2% at the top now, because it's growing—who are paying less taxes. You've got governments—right-wing governments, such as yours and others—who are saying, "Oh, we want to lessen the tax for the people at the top." Well, they're the ones who can afford to pay. The people who need to have relief are the people who are the middle class. I don't argue for a second that we should be reducing all of the taxes on the middle class; I think what we need to do is to restore a balance. That's why Andrea Horwath and the New Democrats said in the last election that we will raise income taxes on those making—what is it, more than \$200,000?

M^{me} France Gélinas: One per cent.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: One per cent for how much—\$220,000?

Ms. Sandy Shaw: It's \$220,000.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: With a \$220,000 individual income, you get a 1% increase. Then, when you get to \$300,000, it goes up again—

Ms. Laura Mae Lindo: Individual.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: That was individual taxes.

That's a way of being able to garner some revenue to deliver the services that you have.

I know, talking to a lot of friends of mine—because it's not impossible to know people who are making \$220,000 and \$300,000 individually. There are people we deal with in our constituencies who are lucky enough to make that kind of money. In all of the door-knocking I've had, I've never had somebody at that income level saying, "I don't want to pay my fair share." I've never had anybody tell me that. I think most people recognize that if we want to have good public services, where you don't have to take your credit card out to go to the hospital, your doctor's office or to school, it costs money, and we all have to pay our fair share.

I say to the government: They put themselves into a box. They've got this box where we now have a \$15-billion deficit because of the decisions that the Liberals made. I don't envy the situation you're in. I was a member of a government that inherited a \$9.5-billion deficit from the Liberals when they left office, when we took over. We spent the better part of five years trying to find ways of slaying that deficit, and finally we did. The budget ended up becoming balanced in the—actually, it was balanced when you guys came to office after one year because of the decisions that we made. The economy turned around. We made key investments in the economy. We reduced

expenditures by being frugal on some of the things that needed to be done. And, yes, we took it on the chin on a couple of decisions. There were a couple of decisions we made that were not popular and hurt our party for years to come, like the social contract.

But the point is, you guys have put yourselves in a box. You're saying, "I'm not going to raise taxes. Actually, I'm going to reduce taxes." You're going to lose revenue, so the \$15 billion will go up. You're saying that you want to lower the deficit. It's a good goal; I don't have an argument with you trying to do that. So that leaves you with one option: You're going to have to cut.

I listened to the government across the way today—the Premier, the Minister of Transportation, the government House leader—yell at our members when we were asking questions about what you're going to cut, saying, "You're fear-mongering." Well, we're not fear-mongering; we're asking what your economic policy is and what your decision is going to be. If you're going to reduce taxes on the one hand and you don't want to borrow, it means the only way to get to balance is to cut expenditures.

Money doesn't grow on trees, I know, because I live in northern Ontario. There are all kinds of trees. They're money in their own economy. We cut trees. It's like a farm. Every 70 years, new trees come along, and we sell those. But every time I've looked at a black spruce or a conifer, I've never seen money growing on that tree. But these guys seem to think that's exactly what's going on. The Conservatives think money grows on trees. Money comes from hard-working people who pay their taxes. Then it's up to the Legislature to decide how we spend those dollars.

This government is putting itself in a box.

When this select committee gets together and starts to look at how we deal with the bad decisions that the Liberal government made—I agree, we need to do something to undo some of the processes that the Liberals put in place that allowed us to get there. But we've also got to look at what you're going to do as a response to that, because that's going to be very important over the next four years.

I can tell you, in your constituency and mine, you're going to get the same thing—I don't care if you're a Liberal, a Conservative, a New Democrat or a Green—when you go knocking at the hospital door and you say, "Sorry, no increases here. In fact, there may be a decrease."

Our hospital, for example, in the city of Timmins, Timmins and District Hospital, is looking at an over \$5-million deficit this year. That's based on what the Liberals did to them, not what you did to them. I want to be very clear about that. The Liberals underfunded health care for the last five years to such an extent—they kept on telling hospitals, "You've got to be more efficient. You've got to find ways to save money. We're not increasing your budget." It wasn't until the NDP forced the government to give them a couple of increases that we got a 1% and a 2% increase for hospitals over a couple of years. But even with all of that, Mr. Speaker, the Timmins and District Hospital is going to be running a \$5-million deficit. Here's the sad

part: In all of your ridings, 70% of hospitals are in the same situation.

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There are some that are more lucky than others—for example, l'Hôpital Montfort. I was just talking to somebody from l'Hôpital Montfort this morning. They're thinking that they can come in at balance. Good for them. They have a different budget structure, in the sense that they get federal dollars for dealing with veterans and they also get dollars from Quebec for patients who come over from the province of Quebec to be treated in Ontario. So they have different revenue sources that they're able to use in order to balance their budget.

But if you're a hospital in Barrie or Timmins or Fort Frances, it's a totally different story. You have fixed costs, and there's not much you can do about the fixed costs. You have to run your emergency ward 24 hours a day; you have to be able to run acute services and other services in your hospital to service the needs of your constituents; and you have to have a medical transfer system that allows you to move patients from, let's say, Fort Frances or Timmins to another referring hospital if need be.

A lot of people may not know this, but I had the unfortunate pleasure of having a heart attack about four years ago. I went into the Timmins and District Hospital emergency—great service. The one thing about our system is, if you're triaged with an emergency, you're at the front of the list. You may wait for things like back surgery and knee surgery, that kind of stuff—it's a lot slower. But my point is that they did what they had to do to stabilize me; they put me on an air ambulance within three hours; I was in the Sudbury district hospital in the riding of my good friend from Nickel Belt and the member from Sudbury; and, by about 10 o'clock that morning, I had maybe eight stents put into me on the left side.

That costs money. When you starve the hospital system, as the Liberals did, and you continue down the road of privatization, which costs us more money—and every study has shown us that. You privatize: It costs more money. It's not cheaper, because the private sector, by nature, has to make a profit. The idea of public health care is that we do it at cost.

I'm going to give you a little story. I have a friend of mine, a neighbour just up the road from where I live, who unfortunately got very sick in Florida about three years ago. As they say, they almost pulled the plug on him—he was that seriously ill. He ended up spending, in the Florida hospital, something like 12 or 14 days with them dealing with him, stabilizing him, and then he came back to Canada. The cost of his health services there, because the insurance company paid, was \$450,000 for that stay. All private: private doctors, private hospital, private medicine—private, private, private everything.

I asked my neighbour, "Can you please get me the bill? When you get the hospital to give you the discharge, get me the bill." My neighbour said, "Why do you need that?" I said, "I want to compare what the cost would be in Ontario." You're going to be shocked when you find out what it was. I gave the bill to the hospital in Timmins and I said, "For

the same service—\$450,000—what would that cost in Ontario?” Take a guess. You won’t even be close: \$27,000.

That’s why we have a public health care system, because what we do in public health care is manage our system in such a way that it’s far more efficient, and we don’t have people skimming off the top and taking profit for the sake of making a dollar. Yes, doctors get paid, and nurses get paid, and we pay supplies and services for the hospital, but we do that in a way that’s far more efficient than if you privatize.

I’ve already heard the Minister of Health and I’ve heard the finance ministers and others start talking about how we’re going to have to find efficiencies in health care. We saw the report coming down today that, “Oh, privatization is the way to go.” So we know what this game is all about. The government is going to move in a way of trying to balance the books by cutting. They’re not going to increase taxes; they’re going to decrease them. They’re not going to do anything when it comes to wanting to borrow more money, because they say they want to borrow less. The only avenue left for them now is to cut.

So I say to the government across the way: You need to be transparent about what you’re doing, because what you’re setting up here—if you don’t do the select committee properly, you will be accused of exactly the same thing the Liberals got accused of: trying to cook the books or trying to obfuscate what the facts are when it comes to how you decided to come to the decisions that you did on various issues.

I think the public is mature enough and smart enough to understand a real debate on these issues. They will make a choice in a little less than four years: Is it the way of the Conservatives to do what it is that they propose to get us to balance, or is it the way of the New Democrats to get us to balance? I’m pretty confident that the public will choose New Democrats when it comes to that decision.

Mr. Randy Hillier: Well, they didn’t.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Well, no, they didn’t the last time. But we increased our seats to 40, and that’s nothing to sneeze at.

My point is that the government, if it wants to maintain its majority, needs to be straight with the public and utilize this committee as a way of making sure that we’re not just looking in the rear-view mirror when we look at bad government decisions that were made by the Liberals. Because we will both agree, Mr. Speaker, that there were all kinds of bad decisions made by the Liberals that ended up costing us billions of dollars that we don’t have.

Most of that \$15 billion you talk about is the result of those decisions, and I agree with you on that one. But don’t repeat the mistake of the Liberals. That’s why you need to accept our amendment that allows the scope of the committee to be open somewhat, because again, people don’t do things when they’re afraid of getting caught. If you don’t accept our amendment, it tells me only that you want to repeat the same mistake of the Liberals.

If you do that—that movie has come through this Legislature before. They went from a majority government to seven. The same thing will happen to you—maybe not

seven; maybe eight, maybe six. But the same thing will happen to you if you repeat the same mistake of the Liberals. The best way to prevent that is to support the amendments that the New Democrats have put forward.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Further debate?

Mr. Lorne Coe: I stand today to speak in support of government motion 7, the motion that, when passed, will create a Select Committee on Financial Transparency.

Earlier today, the Minister of Finance outlined in great detail that our province is now facing a dire financial reality as a result of the complete lack of proper accounting process by the previous Liberal government in the months leading up to the last general election. In fact, it was not just a lack of sound process, Speaker; it was a directed and callous attempt to undermine traditional accounting methods.

It would be easy to simply ignore the consequences of these events and say, as some would suggest, “Let’s just move on.” But the people of Ontario demand more from us, and the people of Ontario deserve better from us. This motion, when passed, will do more than provide a benign response to a picture of an unravelling accounting scheme devised by the previous government.

Examining now not just what went wrong but why it went wrong and who was responsible, through a legislative committee armed with the power to subpoena and examine witnesses and compel the production of documents, can be a valuable exercise—a very valuable exercise, Speaker.

We’re a government of financial transparency and accountability. There’s a need to respond to what we’re discovering in the books and records of the previous Liberal government. It’s especially important that in the analysis by this select committee we find the means and develop the process to ensure that this kind of convoluted accounting cannot happen again in the future.

Surely the people of this great province deserve to have faith that, when a budget is presented or expenses revealed, they honestly and openly represent the actual state of this great province’s finances. No longer should there be the expectation by the people of our province that the government of the day will massage the numbers and paint a financial picture that has no relation to the reality of the moment. If we simply accept that expectation and do nothing, then we’re no better—no better—than our predecessor.

This is not the time for idle contemplation and criticism. Now is the time for action, for sound reform to a process that allowed this accounting nightmare to spin wildly out of control. No longer should there be the expectation by Ontarians that when the Ontario Auditor General releases a report it will point out the gross errors in the financial reports submitted by the government of the day. Speaker, that is simply unacceptable. They deserve better, and we’re going to provide that better government to them. The creation of this select committee on financial transparency and the outcomes developed by the committee

will ensure that all governments going forward will not be able to do what the previous government attempted.

You will know, Speaker, while sitting in the opposition benches, that our finance critic, energy critic and I would speak about the scandal, waste and mismanagement of the previous government. We did it often. Although, as both the Minister of Finance and the government House leader so ably stated this morning, there was more than a suspicion of financial sleight of hand during those long days in opposition. But Speaker, none of us had the complete appreciation of its depth, did we? Now, sadly, we do, and frankly, it's absolutely shocking.

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In his comments this morning, the Minister of Finance pointed out that the Auditor General responded to the previous government's financial statements by issuing a qualified audit opinion because the statements were "significantly misstated." Speaker, like most, I was shocked to hear the minister reference these words used in the auditor's report, but they bear repeating: "conceal," "bogus," "deceptive" and "unreliable." You heard them as well.

Speaker, if you were the purchaser of a private business in Ontario and you received for review a qualified audit opinion, your solicitor and your accountant would certainly demand more. You would not complete a purchase based on a qualified statement. If you asked for more and the response included the words I've just listed, you would certainly make a hasty exit from the purchase. The Auditor General's report was scathing, and so was the report of the commission of inquiry.

We are addressing an abuse of the public trust because we have to deal with it. We cannot simply shrug our shoulders, turn our backs and tell Ontarians that we'll do better. We have a crippling hidden deficit, and somehow, the previous government felt it was acceptable to hide that fact from all of us. We cannot do nothing and let this simply fade away into the dust of history.

How is it that any government feels it has the right to announce to the voters of Ontario that they will benefit from a \$600-million surplus when the reality is so glaringly different? The delta between a surplus of that magnitude and the actual deficit of \$3.7 billion is not slight, but it certainly results from sleight of hand.

In looking ahead to the year 2018-19 and in formulating its budget, the Liberal government told all Ontarians that it would run a \$6.7-billion deficit. Through the efforts of the commission, we now know that the deficit for the current year stands at \$15 billion. You don't make an innocent \$8.3-billion accounting error, Speaker; you simply don't. As the Minister of Finance pointed out so dramatically in his speech before the Economic Club of Canada, that's a deficit of \$15 billion with a capital B. Worse still, they deliberately hid the evidence of this fiscal sinkhole and they attempted to undermine the Auditor General when she called them out for their behaviour.

Well, this new government, my government, cares about the millions and billions both. We will not let what has happened to this province happen again. My colleagues and I demand honesty from ourselves and we

demand it from everyone. Openness in this Select Committee on Financial Transparency will ensure it.

In this Legislature, the Speaker reminded me on one occasion early on in my time as an MPP—it was my first year—that I was unable to use the word "obfuscate" as I criticized the Liberal government of the day. But in quoting from the Auditor General, I believe I'm not under the same restriction. The Auditor General said this: "When governments pass legislation to make their own accounting rules that serve to obfuscate the impact of their financial decisions, their financial statements become unreliable." They become unreliable.

The report went on to state, "When organizational structures and transactions are designed to remove transparency and accountability, and unnecessarily cost Ontarians billions of dollars, the responsibility of an Auditor General is to apprise the Legislature and the public in accordance with the Auditor General's mandate."

Now, Speaker, I will not dare to repeat the complicated procedure developed by the past Liberal government in its dealings with the hydro file. The Minister of Finance earlier today did a perfect job of explaining the off-the-books accounting methods used to lessen the impact of the spiralling hydro rates. But it is important to repeat that the Liberal government chose a very complex, convoluted plan to achieve what the Auditor General's report said: "the mandate to avoid recording an annual deficit and an increase in net debt...."

We owe it to the people of our province to be better than that. In striking a committee on transparency, it's important that, when formed, it will not simply be a committee of the government.

This is not a problem, Speaker—and you'll know this from your long experience here in the Legislature—created by partisanship. Solutions will be found with members of both the government and the official opposition coming together to form a committee of the Legislature. It reflects that not only are we addressing a problem of great magnitude, one that so dramatically impacts all the people of Ontario in such a devastating way, but it also reflects that the solution is to be found in partnership, not partisanship.

It's not my intention to dwell on the amendment proposed by the official opposition this morning. I think we all understand the intent and breadth of that amendment, but it's important to point out that the purpose of any group is to work together to find a path forward. Clearly, the problem we're addressing is a shared one, and I think we can find common ground in discussing it that way. It's found in a body of women and men who are committed to acknowledging a problem and who are equally intent, I believe, on finding a solution. Yes, there will be disagreements as we all work through this process, but I do not believe they will be wedged between political differences.

In the process that the committee will be taking in arriving at conclusions as a committee does go through its process, the truth may not be much fun, but at least, together, we'll know that it's the truth. In my estimation, it's a necessary first step to restoring confidence in the

government's books. Clearly, there are many steps ahead, and part of those steps are what we're discussing today.

Ontario already has the largest subnational debt in the world, and it's imperilling public finances now and for future generations—my granddaughters, as an example; my daughter, as an example; children in this Legislative Assembly. If we paid off our debt to the tune of \$1 billion a year, it would take Ontario until 2356. Just stay with that for a moment: 2356 to get debt-free. Can you imagine? It would take us 338 years to pay it down if we set aside \$1 billion annually; 338 years to pay it down. And that doesn't even include the daily interest charges or adding another penny of debt. It's more than \$24,000 for every man, woman and child. It's wrong and it's irresponsible, absolutely.

1700

In 2017-18, we paid \$11.9 billion in interest payments to service that debt. Our interest payments are greater, Speaker—and you'll appreciate this as someone who served municipally with distinction—than the operating budget of the city of Toronto. Can you imagine that? Our interest payments represent a fifth of our health care budget, almost half of our education budget, and nearly \$1 billion more than what we spend on post-secondary education and training in this province. Interest on debt is the fourth-largest line item in the budget, after health, education and social services. Take a moment and let that sink in. Balancing the budget is not only a fiscal imperative; it's a moral imperative.

Speaker, we owe it to our children, our grandchildren and their children to ensure those vital public services are there for them down the road. I know you would agree with that, and I'm sure others in this Legislative Assembly would agree with that. We owe it to them to ensure there will be good-paying jobs for them when the economy is thriving—I hope that for my granddaughters; I know others do as well—and that there will be social supports for them when economic times are tough. There's nothing compassionate about squandering the public purse to buy a few votes and having nothing left to help those in need tomorrow.

What's clear in all of this is that Ontario is not an island, is it? Our economy is linked to global trends and headwinds. Just as we're open to all the benefits of globalization, of freer trade and travel that grants us access to the latest technologies, consumer goods and services, we're also vulnerable to global financial risks and downturns. It's our moral duty to shore up our defences during prosperous times so we can better weather shocks to the system during tough times. We must be resilient, and that starts with sound financial management, transparency and accountability.

My colleagues will know that our government was elected on a promise to restore accountability and trust in government. This standing committee will start that process and continue the process. It is a responsibility that Premier Ford takes seriously. It's something we all take seriously. It's what governing for the people is all about.

We are bringing greater transparency in preparing, for example, financial documents beginning with the 2017-18 public accounts.

Let me conclude with these thoughts—I'm conscious that I only have two minutes left and there are other speakers on both sides of the House that I'm interested in listening to as we move forward. The task ahead is not an easy one. I don't underestimate that, by any means. The hole is deep, it's a sinkhole, and it will require everyone—everyone—in this Legislative Assembly to make sacrifices, without exception. It will require—and I speak now to the amendment from the official opposition—a unity of purpose, and I believe that unity of purpose is there. It will require a clean, clear vision and a lot of hard work. But, together, I believe that we're all up for the task.

We will work day and night to build a prosperous Ontario, an Ontario that once again is the engine of Confederation. But within the context of all that, above all, we will never lose sight of who we are working for: the people of Ontario.

Thank you, Speaker, for the opportunity to speak on this item.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): I believe the member for Nickel Belt has a point of order.

Mme France Gélinas: I do. I just wanted to recognize that a good friend of mine, Neil Young, is here with us—not the singer, but he does have a pretty recognizable name. Welcome to Queen's Park, Neil.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Not exactly a point of order, but thank you.

Further debate?

Ms. Sandy Shaw: We keep saying that it's an honour to rise, but it has been my honour this afternoon to listen to what has been said in the House. I listened to the member from Timmins. His vast experience and his vast history in this House is something that we could all learn from. We could have possibly actually paid him the million dollars to tell us where we came from and where we are.

I also listened to the member from Whitby. I do hear your heartfelt concern and your compassion on this issue. I share with you a concern for kids and grandkids. I have grandsons—just mentioning that.

I do think that there's a lot that we can learn in this House if we do take the time to listen to one another and listen to all of our deep concerns about this issue.

I've mentioned that we're talking about a lot of experience here. I'm just going to share with you, if you will, my experience as a newbie, my experience as a brand new MPP in, actually, the brand new riding of Hamilton West–Ancaster–Dundas, and I am the newly minted finance and Treasury Board critic. I recognize that I have a lot to learn. I will assure you that I'm listening and I'm ready to learn.

But let me tell you where I feel we've come from, from the campaign, then the election until this moment. There has been a lot of high drama, let's just say, since this government has convened. I know that the people I talked to when I was walking and knocking on doors in my riding—they said many times to me, "You know, if you guys form government, please don't do that thing where you say that

the government before you left the finances in a terrible state. Just get on with the business of fixing the problems that we already know exist.” And so, it’s with that that I come to say to you that it’s time for us to try and acknowledge what we have learned and what we still need answers on.

I would say, with all due respect, that there has been a lot of theatre since Friday, when we had the commission reported on. There has been a lot of high language that was used. I heard the Minister of Finance use the word “lies” and use the words “cooking the books”—some very high language. I would say that that does not serve us well in this House. It doesn’t serve our constituents well. What they are looking to us for is for us to get on with the problem. And we know that this the problem.

I would be remiss if I didn’t share with you a quote from Hansard that the member from Timmins didn’t quite have time to share. It is from the Hansard, and it is from question period. I have learned, as a new MPP, that it’s not called “answer period.” It’s actually called “question period.”

Having said that, it is the current Minister of Finance who said, “My question is for the Premier. Well, another week, and another damning report is out on the government’s faulty fiscal record. This time, we hear the truth from the Financial Accountability Office. The FAO agrees with the Auditor General. They, too, forecast a \$12-billion deficit for 2018-19, twice what the government has said the deficit will be.”

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Surprise.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Who knew?

“The government did not slay the deficit, as they claimed. In fact, the only thing they’ve slayed is any shred of trust or credibility. The government told us one thing, when both legislative officers told us the truth, which happens to be a completely different picture.”

That’s from the Hansard of May 2, 2018.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Who said that?

Ms. Sandy Shaw: It was our Minister of Finance, Mr. Vic Fedeli—yes.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Wow, he was being surprised.

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Ms. Sandy Shaw: He was surprised.

We are not surprised. Let’s just say, we are not surprised, but that doesn’t mean that we are not all committed to moving forward—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Just as a point of clarification: When those statements were made, the member was from Nipissing; he was not the Minister of Finance at that time.

Interjection.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: You have to take that off your record now. You only got three right today.

I would like to offer that the motion to establish the Select Committee on Financial Transparency is a move in the right direction. There is nobody on this side of the House, as we can hear from you, who will stand behind a \$15-billion deficit. Nobody on this side of the House will stand behind anything that does not portray the honest

truth to the people of Ontario, and also, for me, to the people of Hamilton West–Ancaster–Dundas. That’s one thing that we can agree on. That’s a starting point for us working together across the House.

We have established what is known. We understand that we knew there was going to be a deficit, and now we have a number, \$15 billion. If we can put all of the drama and the theatrics behind us, we can move forward to addressing how we’re going to correct this. That’s what we know. But there’s a lot that we don’t know. I would say that what we don’t know and what the people of Ontario don’t know is what this government’s agenda is. What is the government’s plan to address this \$15-billion deficit that we all agree is outrageous?

We’ve come from a campaign, the election period, and we did not hear clear and concise answers from this government as to what they would be doing if they formed government. We heard a lot about \$6 billion and looking for efficiencies. But, really, there was nothing costed there for the people of Ontario to make a clear decision on. So I, like most Ontarians, have looked to this government for answers as to how we’re going to move forward and how we are going to address this deficit, while at the same time ensuring that the services that people rely on, the things that people count on—our hospitals, our schools, our roads—are not compromised in this move to achieving balance.

You will note that, during the campaign, the New Democrats did have a plan to move to balance. We were clear on that. We had a plan to move to balance that did not in any way put at risk the things that matter most to people, like their hospitals and their schools.

My question would be: Is this committee, the Select Committee on Financial Transparency, the place where we are going to find answers? I hope that is the case. I would say that some of the work of this committee will be to put some meat on the bones of this notion that this government is going to find efficiencies. As the member from Timmins has said, when you have a huge deficit that you’re trying to address and when you have a government that has forsaken all kinds of revenue, there are very few options left in your “tool kit,” which is a word they like to use a lot. So, really, what we’re talking about is that we’re either going to increase taxes or we’re going to cut services.

Now that we have this report, the line-by-line audit—I will just note that EY Canada, who did the report, was clear to make sure that this was not an actual audit; I think that was important to note. Now that we have the results of that, there’s maybe something we can work with in there. Maybe we can start to see a path forward, if that’s possible. The one thing that I think we need to address head-on is the fact that it said in that report that this government needs to look to monetizing its assets. To me, “monetizing assets” means sell-offs or privatization. It remains to be seen what “monetizing assets” means.

We have a situation where—

Mr. Gilles Bisson: It’s like selling off Ontario Hydro.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: I was going to get to that.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Oh, jeez. I’m clairvoyant.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Exactly.

We have mentioned a lot about the conditions of our hospitals. Given some of the stories we hear, we know that they are underfunded. And we know that one of the things that Canadians and Ontarians value is our public health care system. It's a system that they expect to be there, and they rely on it. Sadly, this has not been the case lately. So one of the areas where we do not want to see privatization or where there's—

Mr. Randy Hillier: Point of order.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Sorry. I recognize the member on a point of order.

Mr. Randy Hillier: I have trouble seeing how the past general election or health care and hospitals have any relationship to the motion that's on the floor with the select committee. As we know, the motion is on the floor. It has little or nothing to do with what I'm hearing from the member.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Thank you for raising that point of order. Throughout the day and the afternoon, members have been allowed to make reference to what led to the decision to appoint a select committee, which was the spending decisions of a previous government. I have been listening closely. I will take heed of what you have said and point out that you have been the only member today to raise a point of order because of the leeway given by whoever was in the Speaker's chair on these points. But thank you very much.

Continue, please.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate that.

We can move on from that one issue, but I'm bringing people's concerns about what this Select Committee on Financial Transparency will be addressing. What people are concerned about is what happened the last time we had a Conservative government in power with the health care system. We did see 6,000 nurses lose their jobs, and hospitals were closed. I would say that this is the kind of thing that people are concerned about and that this could be the work of this committee.

The other thing, when you talk about monetizing public assets—and let's be clear on what a public asset is: It's something that was bought and paid for by the taxpayers of Ontario, my grandparents, my parents, our grandkids. A public asset is something that belongs to the people of Ontario and it's something that should be held in trust for future generations. That's why people take the notion, the threat that what we're talking about is selling off our public assets, very seriously.

There is no greater example of how people feel when you sell off our public assets than what happened when the government privatized our hydro system. Let's be clear that this is something that needs to be in the work of the Select Committee on Financial Transparency. We had seen that the previous Conservative government under Premier Harris began the privatization of our hydro system. In fact, he's on record as saying that it's the only regret he has from his term, that he was not able to complete the full privatization of that system.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Imagine what your hydro bill would be then.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Exactly.

We have seen people's reaction and concern about privatizing our assets around hydro. It's something that matters to them most. I, like all of you, heard on the doorstep "hydro" and "health care" all the time. These are the two things that are top of mind for people in their ridings and a concern that they have when we look at addressing and reducing this deficit.

The other thing I might add is that people in my riding still remember when we sold off the 407. It's something that irks people to this day. I would ask the question: Do we have a dollar figure as to how much revenue we have forgone in this province by selling off or monetizing that asset? I would suggest that that could be a really good opportunity for the financial transparency committee to get to the bottom of some of these numbers.

We're talking about dollars here, but one of the things that I would like to talk about is when we privatize some of our services that have not just monetary consequences but dire, tragic consequences, life-and-death consequences. There's no greater example of that than the tragedy that occurred in Walkerton. We know that privatization of the water testing system in Walkerton resulted in a tragedy in Ontario that was unparalleled.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: It was a change in regulations.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: A change of the regulations. Seven people died, and it was in an effort to streamline and reduce costs. It was an efficiency. What we have now is an economic impact of that that still lingers.

If we are trying to look at an effective way of reducing the deficit while at the same time maintaining services that are critical to people, we need to look to the past. We need to look to some of these examples of things that have not gone well for the people of Ontario.

This committee is welcomed by us. It is welcomed by the people of Ontario. It has been said that the best disinfectant is sunshine, so let's shed a little light on all of this. Let's get answers and let's work in a way that is for the benefit of the people of Ontario. This is something we can agree on.

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But I must say, Mr. Speaker, that the notion of working together—it has not been my experience to date in this House that the government is entirely committed to working in an open and transparent way with us in the opposition.

Again, being new, when I kept hearing that I was a member of Her Majesty's loyal opposition, it was something I took great pride in: the notion that our work here is an integral part of what is our constitutional democracy, that our work here is important and needs to be respected. Just as we have said that we respect that the government has a majority and the government is here to move its agenda forward, working collaboratively, respecting the contribution, the knowledge and the input of the opposition is something that would serve not just this House well but would serve the people of Ontario well.

I look to some of the changes we've already seen: changes to the standing orders that seem to limit the ability of the opposition to provide input into important bills, bills that will change people's lives and that will transform Ontario. I see that not as a collaborative move; I see that as a move that will limit thoughtful debate, that will limit input. And not taking bills to committee is something that I really cannot believe: that a government that says they are for the people would not want to come up with the best decisions, would not want to hear from experts on both sides of the House and hear from the public on ways they can make bills better. Because at the end of the day, what you end up with is groupthink. You all agree on the same thing, you all stand up and cheer the same cheer, but what you need is to hear from other people, from other people's experience in order to improve the legislation that you propose, and, in this instance, in order to improve the recommendations, the way we are moving forward in this province to restore ourselves to accountability and fiscal responsibility.

My question would be: Is this government genuinely serious about working together? I hope that that is true. As I said earlier, I listened to the member from Whitby and I heard genuine sincerity, genuine concern that the state we are in now will have an adverse effect on the future of his kids and grandchildren. However, when I look at the composition of the standing committee, I can't help but think that this committee is not designed to have equal and fair input by both sides of the House.

I can think of no better example of this lack of what I would call respect for due process than the member from King-Vaughan, who just earlier sprung upon us changes to our sitting schedule. That, to me, is proof positive that this is not a government that wants to work together. This is a government that will put through its agenda in such a way that they may be in an instance where they do not have the opportunity to hear good ideas, where they do not have the opportunity to learn from the experience of some of our senior members of the House. I always find that is something that—I'm sorry to say I was disappointed to see that this is the way the government, as a brand new government, is treating the role of this House and is treating the integral role of the loyal opposition.

So let's strike this committee. Let's look at the amendment and approve the amendment that ensures this is a robust committee, that it is actually accountable and actually is transparent. What I would recommend is—this is a government that is, in fact, looking to walk the talk, if you will, and these amendments are ones that they would welcome. They would welcome that we have a committee that everyone understands is meaningful, that they mean what they say and will produce results and will produce findings that all the people of Ontario are looking to. They're looking for us to have answers because they have genuine concerns about their hospitals, about their schools, about their roads, and we hear them. We all hear them in this House.

I would also recommend, if we are going to be truly accountable, if we're truly working for the people of

Ontario, that we stop looking backward. This ongoing theatre about painting the dire picture of how the Liberals put us in this position, which we have clearly said we agree with—those charades need to end. People need to see us seriously working for the people of Ontario. We need to look not just at the past but at the future, and I would suggest that includes the actions that this government has undertaken since they formed the government. We want to look at everything. We want to see what the costs are associated with some of the decisions you have made: cancelling contracts and scrapping the green energy bill. Those are answers that people would like to have.

So I look forward to this committee. I look forward to approving the amendments. I think that the people of Ontario look to us to do our job, to give them honest and open answers.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Further debate?

Mr. Mike Harris: I was getting a little concerned about my colleagues, the official opposition; they had not brought up my father's government for a little while. So thank you for doing that.

I just wanted to let you know that I will also be splitting my time with the member from Carleton.

I'm happy to speak today on motion 7, and I, for one, am very happy that our government for the people is going forward with setting up a Select Committee on Financial Transparency.

I think I bring a bit of a unique perspective to this. As the member from King-Vaughan mentioned earlier today during question period, there are a lot of young people that are having trouble getting by in Ontario right now. There seems to be a bit of a disconnect between some of the older generations and some of the younger generations. Things that worked in the past don't necessarily work the way that people wish they could in the future.

I'm 33 years old. I'm a father of five, lucky enough to be blessed with a beautiful family, four boys—

Applause.

Mr. Mike Harris: Thank you—four boys, aged 12, 10, seven and four, and then we finally had a baby girl, who is two and a half years old. God bless my wife for being able to put up with the schedule that we MPPs have to deal with. It's certainly been very busy in our house over the last few months.

But one thing that I'd like to mention that I haven't really heard too much—

Mr. Gilles Bisson: You have a very unique perspective on that, which is interesting.

Mr. Mike Harris: I do have a very unique perspective.

What I would like to do is elaborate a little bit further on what I heard at the doors when I was out campaigning over the six months leading up to the election, and that was that the debt in Ontario was atrocious. It was exceeding—I think, at that time, we were around 330-some-odd billion dollars, and people were very, very concerned with that.

That's actually one of the reasons why I got involved in politics, because I was very concerned with how the government at that time was mortgaging my children's future

and the futures to come. I heard a staggering number from the member from Whitby, saying that it's going to take over 300 years—300 years, Speaker; that's seven or eight generations—to be able to pay down the debt that Ontario has. I know, for one, that myself and my children and their children and the generations and generations after that are not going to be able to afford that.

We have a climate in Ontario where people are coming out of university or college, or they are going to work at a young age to raise a family, and they are not able to come and buy a house; they are not able to purchase land. It's very, very difficult for young people to get by in this current climate. Part of that is because of the crippling debt that our province has accumulated over the last 15 years under the Liberals.

To get to a few of the numbers, and I know these have been stated a few times, the 2018 budget said it was going to have a 600-some-odd-million surplus. We have now found out that that was actually a \$3.7-billion deficit. These numbers, as some members on the opposite side of the House have stated, maybe weren't a surprise to some. I can tell you, Speaker, they were a surprise to me. I didn't think that things were going to be as bad as they are.

Now, with the commission of inquiry that has shed light on the fact that the 2018-19 budget was supposed to be running a deficit of \$6.7 billion and is actually running a deficit of \$15 billion—it's just staggering. It's absolutely shameful. I, for one, was even more surprised by that number.

1730

One of the main concerns that my constituents had when I was out campaigning was: How are we going to be able to pay down this debt? One of the main ways we can do that is returning to a balanced budget. I know that is something that our government is working towards. I know we're diligently looking for ways to find efficiencies and to move towards that space.

I think that's one thing that's very important to remember with this: This select committee is going to take steps to restore accountability and trust in government. That's another thing that we campaigned on. I know that we use the term "Promises made, promises kept," but this is the hallmark of our government, Mr. Speaker—

Mr. Sam Oosterhoff: Promise made, promise kept.

Mr. Mike Harris: —making sure that we do keep the promises that we made during the election.

I'd like to thank the member from Niagara West for coming in on that where I was hoping the rest of the caucus might be able to join in chorus.

Interjection: You have to try again.

Mr. Mike Harris: I'll bring it back.

This select committee, I feel, is very important. I find that the people of Ontario are also going to think it's very important.

We went through scandal after scandal with the Liberal government, whether it was gas plants, whether it was eHealth, Ornge—there were a lot of different things that the people of Ontario had to put up with for 15 years.

If we look over at the seats that the independent Liberal members occupy now—we saw on June 7 that Ontarians sent a clear message to the Liberal Party and reduced them to seven seats. I think that that just goes to show, again, the discord between what the government at the time thought maybe were good ideas—I don't know how they would think that—and that intergenerational play.

I, for one, am very happy, as I said, to see this committee being established. I hope that they do an excellent job, and I know that they will.

I'm now going to turn my time over to the member from Carleton.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): The member did say he'd be sharing his time. I recognize the member from Carleton.

Ms. Goldie Ghamari: "When governments pass legislation to make their own accounting rules that serve to obfuscate the impact of their financial decisions, their financial statements become unreliable." That is a direct quote from the Auditor General of Ontario. It is the first thing that she writes in her 53-page report.

This morning, Minister Fedeli moved:

"That a Select Committee on Financial Transparency be appointed to consider and report to the House its observations and recommendations with respect to the report submitted by the Independent Financial Commission of Inquiry; and

"That the committee investigate and report on the accounting practices, decision-making and policy objectives of the previous government or any other aspect of the report that the committee deems relevant; and

"That the committee have the power to send for persons, papers and things"—that's an important point, Mr. Speaker, that I will be referring back to.

"That the committee be composed of six members of the party forming the government, three members of the official opposition...; and

"That the committee be authorized to meet at the call of the Chair; and

"That the committee be given priority to use the Amethyst Room for its meetings; and

"That the committee shall present, or if the House is not meeting, release by depositing with the Clerk of the Assembly, its interim report by November 1, 2018, and its final report by December 13, 2018..."

Mr. Speaker, we campaigned on a promise to be efficient, to be reliable and to respect taxpayer dollars. For one, I am very excited, and I am very proud, to see that this committee is going to be working very hard to come up with an interim report in just six weeks and to come up with its final report in two months. This is a government that's here to work hard for the people. We have started early, we have been non-stop and we're going to continue moving forward.

Again, Mr. Speaker, I'm going to echo my comments from yesterday that after 15 years of Liberal stagnation, we need to get Ontario back on track. This committee—

Applause.

Ms. Goldie Ghamari: Thank you. This committee is just another step in that process. It's just another way to move forward and to get things done.

We have a very serious situation here in Ontario. First, our public accounts: The Liberals claimed that there was a \$600-million surplus in the 2017-18 budget. However, at that time, we learned that instead, there was a \$3.7-billion deficit. Second, the Auditor General approved and signed off on these public accounts in 2017-18. This was the first time she had signed the government's books with a clean slate in three years. Previously, the Liberal government only had a qualified opinion, and a qualified opinion means that there were outstanding unanswered questions by the government.

Mr. Speaker, how can there be any questions outstanding? Minister Fedeli said it best: This is accounting. The numbers either add up or they don't. There's no ambiguity. There are no grey areas. You look at the numbers, you add them up and you need to balance the budget at the end of the day. Why were there any ambiguities? Why was the Liberal government refusing to answer questions and refusing to give the Auditor General all of the necessary documents that she needed in order to make a proper statement on the budget?

In fact, we found this past week, despite their claims of a surplus, that we are instead facing a \$15-billion deficit. That's shameful, Mr. Speaker, because that deficit is being paid for by the people of Ontario. That is money that people are paying in taxes. Instead of putting that money toward services like health care or education or anything else, that money is going to pay off interest.

The Liberals also claimed that their budget had \$1.4 billion in efficiencies. However, the commission's findings show that, again, there were absolutely zero efficiencies in their budget. There was nothing in the budget relating to any potential savings and there was nothing in the budget outlining any ambitious programs that could lead to such efficiencies.

That's the purpose of the select committee. It's to get to the bottom of how somebody could say that there was a \$3.7-billion deficit when it wasn't true or how somebody could say that there was a \$15-billion deficit when it wasn't true. But the real issue is not about who said what, and it's not whether the \$3.7-billion number was accurate or whether the \$15-billion number was accurate. The real issue is the breadth and depth that the Liberals went to to make sure we could never put this financial map back together to understand exactly and precisely what they did.

Well, their plan failed, and this select committee that we are going to be establishing is going to go back and retrace the steps that the previous government took. That brings me to that point I made about the committee having the power to send for persons, papers and things. Unlike the previous government, we campaigned on responsibility, accountability and trust, and we are going to get to the bottom of what happened. The people that the committee calls will not be able to rely on ministerial privilege or confidentiality or anything like that. When this committee

calls for a person or calls for a document or calls for anything else, they will have to bring it. It will have to be brought to them.

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Premier Ford announced that initial commission of inquiry back in July. It's not uncommon in politics for a new government to call the previous government's numbers into question. It's something that's done all the time. But what happened under this last government is very different than any other new government taking over. All you have to do is look at the Auditor General's last report on the state of government. She reviewed the Liberals' pre-election report on finances and she concluded that their numbers were not a reasonable presentation of Ontario's finances. That's really serious to hear from an Auditor General.

She also followed up on why the numbers don't add up. She said, "The government is making up its own accounting rules." Then she used terminology like "conceal," "bogus," "deceptive" and "unreliable." Imagine that, Mr. Speaker: The Auditor General called the previous Liberal government deceptive and unreliable. I think that message was heard loud and clear, not just by our party, not just by the official opposition, but by Ontarians all across the province. We saw that in the election results. We saw that, on June 7, Ontarians made a choice. They decided that they deserved better. Indeed, they do deserve better than a government that is deceptive and unreliable—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): If I could, just for clarification: As I recall, the Auditor General said the practices were that, not the government.

Ms. Goldie Ghamari: Yes, Mr. Speaker. To clarify, the practices of the government were deceptive and unreliable, yes.

What we're witnessing right now is without precedent in recent politics. This has never happened. When taken together, the conclusions of the Auditor General and the commission of inquiry represent a scathing indictment of how Kathleen Wynne and the Liberals abused the public's trust. They pursued a reckless spree of debt-financed spending and then deliberately deployed a series of accounting tricks to hide the resulting costs from the public. This resulted in the crippling hidden debt that is only now being brought forward. It puts our very future in jeopardy.

I echo the statements my colleague from Kitchener-Conestoga made, in that what they have done is putting our very future in jeopardy. I don't have five children, myself, Mr. Speaker. God bless his wife. I can't imagine what she has gone through.

It's putting the future of all of our children, our grandchildren and their grandchildren in jeopardy. The safety nets that we need were being used up by the Liberal government.

This select committee is going to get to the bottom of who knew what and who did what about it. We're finally going to learn the truth, because that is what Ontarians expect of us, and that is what we owe to them as their government. What happened should never again happen in

Ontario. In fact, it should never happen again anywhere in Canada.

The Liberal Party's accountability did not end on election day; it began on election day when Premier Ford said that people deserve answers, and we are here to ensure that the people get those answers, because we are a government for the people.

Mr. Speaker, it's important as well to acknowledge the divide between what the independent legislative officers are saying that the government is doing and what the government says that it is doing. That divide grew very, very large last year.

I am proud to be part of the committee on public accounts, and I look forward to working with the Auditor General and establishing a strong and positive relationship between government and our independent legislative officers, because at the end of the day we need to work together to do what's best for the people of Ontario. We need to work together to ensure that we are being responsible with their money, because it is not our money. It's not something that we can toy around with and play around with and spend at whim. This is the money that is earned from people who work long hours, sometimes back-breaking labour, and they need to pinch every penny. And at the same time, we need to respect that and we need to make sure it's taken care of.

That's why I support this committee and motion 7.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Thank you. I would remind all members that when we're speaking of a former Premier or another member of the House, we refer to the riding or put the Premier in front of the name, as opposed to using that person's name. Thank you.

Further debate?

Mr. Michael Mantha: I want to start my comments tonight by just going back to many of the points that the member from Timmins brought up earlier. I'm glad that my new friend from King–Vaughan is here, because we just had one of those moments that I think a lot of Ontarians and those who are watching on TV—oh, and by the way, bonjour, Huguette à Dubreuilville, and good day, Mrs. Trepanier in Gore Bay. It's always an honour for me to stand in my place on behalf of the good people of Algoma–Manitoulin and give a few words on this debate.

I think there are a lot of people from back home who wouldn't mind hearing some of the stories that we hear, and these are things that have been very key and important to me. I know my friend from King–Vaughan will indulge me, as I look up to the owl and you look up to the eagle—or let's reverse that: I look up to the eagle; you look up to the owl. We know what that means. But for the people at home who don't know what that means: As I look up to the eagle, my role as an opposition member is to be vigilant in holding this government to account. Your role, as a government, is to be wise and provide services not just for some but for all Ontarians.

We came back from a very hectic summer session really fast. Everybody was just still full of energy—I almost let that one loose, didn't I? Everyone was full of energy, and there are a lot of new government members,

just like we have a lot of new opposition members. We are thinking that over the last three months, all the debates that have been going on in this House are normal. Well, it's normal to a certain extent, but it is not normal where we have not had the ability to work together.

I want to go back to some of the comments that the member from Timmins made earlier. It's exactly that: It's trying to work together, trying to find ways and means that—obviously we know, from an opposition position, that you're right: You're a majority government and you will be bringing your agenda forward. We're not denying that. However, there is a way that we can work together.

A while ago, while other members were speaking, I noticed the member from King–Vaughan coming in, and as soon as we came in, I joked with him that we have a secret code, that we pick on him as soon as he comes in. And it's true: We do. No, no, I'm kidding. It's not. But there is going to be a time that we're going to have more dialogue. I firmly believe that we will get through this time period and we're going to be able to have a cordial—oh, and by the way, I met some of your constituents when I was up at the IPM. They're great people; they love you. I just wanted to let you know. Actually, I've got pictures of them, and I've got to give them to you.

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We're going to get through this process. We're going to have more engaging opportunities. Whether it's going to be in our evenings—like tonight, we have receptions that are going to be going on. We're going to be talking there. Committee work is also a great opportunity for us to find out each other's positions, have an engaging conversation.

I was away with a couple of parliamentarians on an exchange tour. It's quite remarkable how common it is where you can find middle ground as far as where we can work, but again it goes back to what the member from Timmins was saying. It's a matter of a little bit of respect, building a bridge, having that relationship and, really, extending that olive branch so that we can work together because, lo and behold, you're going to be surprised that we're going to probably be agreeing with a lot of the issues that you're bringing forward. We're also going to be disagreeing, and as you are going to be vigilant in regard to being the owl and being wise for all Ontarians, we're going to take our role as opposition and we're going to be very vigilant in order to keep you to account.

The minister came out with a great, big revelation, that the books were not what they were said to be and that the Liberal government had cooked up some plans and changed the books and followed—it was just, oh, shocking to hear that stuff. I was going through some of the paperwork that I had on my desk, Speaker, and I came across the Review of the 2018 Pre-Election Report on Ontario's Finances by—guess who: the Auditor General on April 25, 2018. I am almost positive—when I picked up this copy, guess where it was. At that point, I was sitting over there and my colleagues across the way who are in government now, I'm pretty sure, were sitting in the general area where I am now. I'm almost positive,

Speaker. You were here, too, right? I'm pretty sure that's what was happening. I recall many of us picking up this copy in the backroom, and we were looking at it and we said, "We told you so. We told you that was happening." I remember my friend from Nipissing, who stood up on many occasions and pretty well lectured the government in regard to what they were doing. There's quite a few quotes that were read from him earlier in regard to how he brought it to the attention of the floor.

Again, for me and the people back home in Algoma-Manitoulin, it baffles me at times as to what happened yesterday or the day before when they came out with this huge revelation that we were looking at \$15 billion—well, then it was \$12 billion; now, we're looking at \$15 billion. There's a time span it went through in regard to what actually had happened.

It's pretty interesting for the people back home who are looking at this and saying, "Well, didn't we already see this? This has already happened. How is this new?" Anyway, I mentioned it to the member from Timmins. I said that we could have saved the government a lot of time and a lot of media. We could have just copied and pasted what was done last year and put it into this year.

Anyway, what I thought was important is part of what the Auditor General said in her report, and I think it's worthwhile that we read it again because it was said last year in April when the report came out.

Her report says, "The government released its 2018 Pre-Election Report"—I need my glasses—"on Ontario's Finances (Pre-Election Report) on March 28, 2018...." So this is not new news; this is old news.

"We concluded that the pre-election report is not a reasonable presentation of Ontario's finances insofar as its expense estimates are understated for two items...." We agree with you. We know what the Liberals did. I know that our finance critic, along with the government's finance critic, who was in opposition then, argued and brought these points to the legislative floor many, many times before the election was called.

It goes on to say, "After adjusting for these items, the annual deficit would be \$11.7 billion for 2018-19 ... \$12.2 billion for 2019-20 ... and \$12.5 billion for 2020-21...."

"When expenses are understated, the perception is created that government has more money available than it actually does." We agree with you. We argued with you. We were right there; you guys were right here. We were raising the same points, talking to the government. We were, as a team, as an opposition, looking up to the eagle and telling this government what it was doing wrong. There's no disputing that.

"Therefore, more money will need to be borrowed to pay for the unrecorded expenses even when government reports an annual surplus or a balanced budget. A perception is also created of an improving trend in the relationship between the government's financial obligations and its capacity to raise funds to meet them, when the burden of net debt is actually increasing." There's no disputing that fact. There's no disputing what the Auditor General

had said and how she brought it forward. This is not new news. We knew this was coming.

Again, we go back to how we need to come to an agreement with regard to how we can both be effective. I recall that we had our finance critic, the member from Kitchener-Waterloo, who had worked very closely with the member from Nipissing on a variety of issues, not just what had come out from the Auditor General but also the gas plants issue. We also had our member from Toronto-Danforth, who had worked tirelessly alongside you. We worked in order to discover a lot of the questions that a lot of Ontarians were putting forward to us, to your offices, to our offices, asking, "Why is this happening? Why are we wasting so much money? Where is this money going? How is it being hidden?" We did our homework.

There's no reason why we can't have those kinds of discussions—which brings me back to what we want to do with this committee. Yes, as the government of the day, you will have the majority of members there. You will have six, with one chairing the committee. We will have three. But let's open it up. Let's open it up so that each one of those members on the committee has the ability to question and to pull the information that they need and pull individuals who we want to sit in that chair.

If you're a government for the people, as you so claim, show it. Show it by giving the opportunity to each one of these members to bring the information that they need forward. You as a government should understand that you do not have all the answers. A good government will know that. That's why government goes out and we have our committees. We go out and we reach out to individuals; we reach out to our stakeholders. We have our meetings that I know you have. Tonight, we're going to be going out to a reception. We're going to be engaging with those individuals who are there; we're going to be listening to their priorities, their costs, their issues and their challenges, not only through work, but we also do a lot of other things—through our activities that we do in our own communities. I know that each and every one of you—myself, I spend a lot of time in my arenas during the wintertime. Yes, I go to watch a little bit of hockey. Of course I do; I enjoy it. But we also sit in the same places where we normally go to while we're in those arenas, where an individual can say, "Oh, my kid is over there by the visitors' bench, sitting. Go grab a hold of them, and they'll come to you and they'll talk to you about what their issue is and what their challenge is." And you take that opportunity. You go behind the bleachers, where you need to have that private conversation with them.

We can do that, but you need to really look at the amendment that's being put forward and you need to support it. If you're going to be an open and transparent government, then show it. Look up to the owl and be wise in the decision that you're going to be making. Really give the opportunity for true transparency so that you can get the information, because admitting that you don't have all the answers is a sign of leadership. Opening yourself up to listening to other views is a sign of leadership. That's grounded and that's what makes good governance. That's

what's going to make this committee work that much stronger—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Thank you. The member will have time at the next sitting to conclude his remarks on this bill.

Debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Pursuant to standing order 38, the question that this House do now adjourn is deemed to have been made.

1800

ADJOURNMENT DEBATE

ANTI-RACISM ACTIVITIES

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): The member for Toronto–St. Paul's has given notice of dissatisfaction with an answer to a question given by the Premier. The member will have up to five minutes to debate the matter, and the Premier or his parliamentary assistant may reply for up to five minutes.

I recognize the member for Toronto–St. Paul's.

Ms. Jill Andrew: Good evening, Mr. Speaker, and thank you.

My grave concerns with Premier Doug Ford's dismissal of my demand that he denounce far-right mayoral candidate Faith Goldy, a neo-Nazi white supremacist—forget "sympathizer"; let's just call a spade a spade—are echoed throughout our official opposition. They're echoed by any Torontonian, Ontarian and Canadian who has any functioning moral and ethical compass.

My specific riding community of Toronto–St. Paul's and, collectively, we the people of Ontario who are committed to moving our province forward, not backward, do not stand for anti-Semitism, anti-Black racism, anti-Indigenous racism, homophobia, transphobia or any everyday, political or institutional form of discrimination, hate actions or speech.

When our Premier, Doug Ford, refused to answer my question yesterday on whether or not he would unequivocally denounce Faith Goldy and her hateful campaign and apologize for physically appearing in the photo and viral video—which the Premier knows she is using as an endorsement for her campaign—the Premier demonstrated to all Ontarians just how low on his list of priorities combatting racism and bigotry truly are. Rather than answer my question, the Premier decided to brag about big numbers at his events. Contrary to popular belief, barbecue chicken isn't a solution to racism.

In fact, the Ford government has done pretty well demonstrating their own institutional racism by slashing budgets and subcommittees with respect to the Anti-Racism Directorate. The Ford government also had no problem with its anti-democratic meddling in our municipal election, which would have seen, in record numbers, more progressive, racialized people running for office than ever before, many of whom have since had to take a back seat—again.

Instead of answering the question I posed, the Premier resorted, comfortably—comfortably, which is very telling—to what many people who support racists, racist actions and beliefs or who, frankly, are racist themselves tend to fall back on. Premier Ford said, "Boy, Mr. Speaker, they've sunk to a new low. If they were at Ford Fest, it was the most diverse group anywhere in Canada." In other words, the Ford government refused to answer our question and instead reminded us of how many Black, brown, purple and orange friends showed up to Ford Fest.

Here is a lesson on racism: When you're called out on racism and you use your Black or Jewish friend or fellow MPP to demonstrate how progressive and not racist you are, that's racist; that's anti-Semitic. What a way to insult Ontarians' intelligence and our protected charter and human rights.

Faith Goldy is running for mayor, and anti-hate groups such as the Canadian Anti-Hate Network have demonstrated that Faith Goldy is using her campaign as a vehicle to disseminate hate. Faith Goldy has praised neo-Nazis for their actions in Charlottesville, which resulted in one death and 20 people injured. Faith Goldy also claims that she wants Toronto to be 96% white. Is this the person that Premier Doug Ford—that every single one of you over there—wants to be consciously taking pictures next to?

Doug Ford knows Faith Goldy. He has met her before. He has appeared at events with her before. He has taken pictures with her. I've got them on my computer. Furthermore, in the picture featuring our Premier, Faith Goldy was surrounded by people wearing "Faith for Mayor" T-shirts.

The Premier's responses are weak: "I can't help when thousands of people are coming at you and they're taking pictures." Guess what? There weren't thousands of people; it was a handful of people.

Our official opposition has asked today: Would Premier Doug Ford denounce Faith Goldy by using her name? He has denied to do that. That is hogwash. That is absolute hogwash.

Prove it to the people, Premier. Prove it to the people, Ford government. Issue a statement. Hold a press conference. Denounce Faith Goldy by name. The Ford government must state clearly they do not support or endorse Faith Goldy for mayor of Toronto by name.

People at Ford Fest have been gay-bashed. Brian Matos was beaten in 2014 at Ford Fest, and then-city councillor Doug Ford blamed the gay person for being bashed at his Ford Fest.

Denounce Faith Goldy. And shame on all of you who are sitting there like seals letting it happen.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): The member for King–Vaughan.

Mr. Stephen Lecce: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Let me start by saying this—and I will be very clear and unequivocal: I, and this entire Progressive Conservative caucus, along with the Premier, denounce hate, bigotry and intolerance in any form. Period, full stop, we denounce it. There is no place for hatred. There is no place

for bigotry. There is no place for intolerance anywhere in this province.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Order, please.

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Order, please. I didn't interrupt when the government members were interrupting you because I figured, okay, you've got 30 seconds and I'm going to eat up your time when I stand up.

This is early in the debate. Please show the government member who is speaking on behalf of the Premier—give him the opportunity to say what he has to say.

Mr. Stephen Lecce: Thank you, Speaker. As I said, there is no place for hatred, there is no place for bigotry and there is no place for intolerance anywhere in this province. However, we cannot pretend that Ontario and Canada do not have incidents. From time to time, sad, disgusting incidents of hatred and bigotry and intolerance rear their ugly heads in our society. It can and may happen in each and every one of our hometowns. It can happen in each and every one of the ridings we have the pleasure of representing in this House, but we know that the overwhelming number of proud Ontarians do not stand for it. They do not condone it, and they do not let it pass without letting those around them know that it is not acceptable. They denounce it, just as the Premier and our entire caucus does.

I want to take a moment, Speaker, if I may, to tell a personal story. I'm a first-generation immigrant. My parents came to this country from Italy. They left their home country in search of economic opportunity and to give their children a better future. They arrived in Canada, eager to start a new future in their lives, eager for a chance to work and start their own families and eager to be accepted by their countrymen and women. But it wasn't without challenge, it wasn't without adversity and it wasn't without intolerance. Hate and bigotry in all of its

forms offer no value to our society. It is counter-productive. It imposes unnecessary burdens on those building a life for themselves and their families.

This government will neither endorse nor tolerate hate of any kind. This government's zero-tolerance policy is embedded in our commitment to the Anti-Racism Directorate. The mandate of this directorate allows our officials to identify and subsequently eradicate systemic barriers of marginalized groups in Ontario.

The Ministry of Community Safety and Correctional Services has collaborated with various ministries to develop an integrated and cohesive approach to the presence of systemic racism in Ontario. The Anti-Racism Directorate allows our government to create policies and programs to expand opportunities to marginalized Ontarians.

To be clear, racism in Ontario should not be and is not a partisan issue. Our government welcomes and encourages input from all members of the Ontario Legislature, including from the member from St. Paul's.

The steps we take now to combat hate and bigotry in our province benefit Ontarians today and well into the future. Identity politics fraught with hate and intolerance will not ensure the success of this province moving forward. The success of this province hinges on the presence of equality of opportunity for every single Ontarian. This is a principle that I and our entire Progressive Conservative caucus stand behind every single day in this Legislature.

Ontarians expect their government to foster a society that encourages all individuals to seize opportunities to build a better life, like my parents did when they arrived 50-odd years ago in this country.

Our government is strengthened by the diversity of faith, heritage and age. On this side of the House, we will stand up for equal opportunity and uphold the universal values of inclusion, respect and tolerance here at home.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): This House is now adjourned until 9 o'clock tomorrow morning.

The House adjourned at 1810.

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Hassan, Faisal (NDP)	York South—Weston / York-Sud— Weston	
Hatfield, Percy (NDP)	Windsor—Tecumseh	Second Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Deuxième vice-président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
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Hogarth, Christine (PC)	Etobicoke—Lakeshore	
Horwath, Andrea (NDP)	Hamilton Centre / Hamilton-Centre	Leader, Official Opposition / Chef de l'opposition officielle
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Mantha, Michael (NDP)	Algoma—Manitoulin	
Martin, Robin (PC)	Eglinton—Lawrence	
Martow, Gila (PC)	Thornhill	
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McNaughton, Hon. / L'hon. Monte (PC)	Lambton—Kent—Middlesex	Minister of Infrastructure / Ministre de l'Infrastructure
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Miller, Paul (NDP)	Hamilton East—Stoney Creek / Hamilton-Est—Stoney Creek	
Mitas, Christina Maria (PC)	Scarborough Centre / Scarborough- Centre	
Monteith-Farrell, Judith (NDP)	Thunder Bay—Atikokan	
Morrison, Suze (NDP)	Toronto Centre / Toronto-Centre	
Mulroney, Hon. / L'hon. Caroline (PC)	York—Simcoe	Attorney General / Procureure générale Minister Responsible for Francophone Affairs / Ministre déléguée aux Affaires francophones
Natyshak, Taras (NDP)	Essex	

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Nicholls, Rick (PC)	Chatham-Kent—Leamington	Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée Deputy Speaker / Vice-président
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Parsa, Michael (PC)	Aurora—Oak Ridges—Richmond Hill	
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Rasheed, Kaleed (PC)	Mississauga East—Cooksville / Mississauga-Est—Cooksville	
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Sarkaria, Prabmeet Singh (PC)	Brampton South / Brampton-Sud	
Sattler, Peggy (NDP)	London West / London-Ouest	
Schreiner, Mike (GRN)	Guelph	
Scott, Hon. / L'hon. Laurie (PC)	Haliburton—Kawartha Lakes—Brock	Minister of Labour / Ministre du Travail
Shaw, Sandy (NDP)	Hamilton West—Ancaster—Dundas / Hamilton-Ouest—Ancaster—Dundas	
Simard, Amanda (PC)	Glengarry—Prescott—Russell	
Singh, Gurratan (NDP)	Brampton East / Brampton-Est	
Singh, Sara (NDP)	Brampton Centre / Brampton-Centre	Deputy Leader, Official Opposition / Chef adjointe de l'opposition officielle
Skelly, Donna (PC)	Flamborough—Glanbrook	
Smith, Dave (PC)	Peterborough—Kawartha	
Smith, Hon. / L'hon. Todd (PC)	Bay of Quinte / Baie de Quinte	Minister of Government and Consumer Services / Ministre des Services gouvernementaux et des Services aux consommateurs Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire du gouvernement
Stevens, Jennifer (Jennie) (NDP)	St. Catharines	
Stiles, Marit (NDP)	Davenport	
Surma, Kinga (PC)	Etobicoke Centre / Etobicoke-Centre	
Tabuns, Peter (NDP)	Toronto—Danforth	
Tangri, Nina (PC)	Mississauga—Streetsville	
Taylor, Monique (NDP)	Hamilton Mountain	
Thanigasalam, Vijay (PC)	Scarborough—Rouge Park	
Thompson, Hon. / L'hon. Lisa M. (PC)	Huron—Bruce	Minister of Education / Ministre de l'Éducation
Tibollo, Hon. / L'hon. Michael A. (PC)	Vaughan—Woodbridge	Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services / Ministre de la Sécurité communautaire et des Services correctionnels
Triantafilopoulos, Effie J. (PC)	Oakville North—Burlington / Oakville-Nord—Burlington	
Vanthof, John (NDP)	Timiskaming—Cochrane	Deputy Leader, Official Opposition / Chef adjoint de l'opposition officielle
Wai, Daisy (PC)	Richmond Hill	
Walker, Bill (PC)	Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound	
West, Jamie (NDP)	Sudbury	
Wilson, Hon. / L'hon. Jim (PC)	Simcoe—Grey	Minister of Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade / Ministre du Développement économique, de la Création d'emplois et du Commerce
Wynne, Kathleen O. (LIB)	Don Valley West / Don Valley-Ouest	
Yakabuski, Hon. / L'hon. John (PC)	Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke	Minister of Transportation / Ministre des Transports
Yarde, Kevin (NDP)	Brampton North / Brampton-Nord	
Yurek, Hon. / L'hon. Jeff (PC)	Elgin—Middlesex—London	Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry / Ministre des Richesses naturelles et des Forêts

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Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Wayne Gates
Stan Cho, Jill Dunlop
John Fraser, Wayne Gates
Stephen Lecce, Gila Martow
Jane McKenna, Judith Monteith-Farrell
Lindsey Park, Randy Pettapiece
Peter Tabuns
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Timothy Bryan

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Comité permanent des finances et des affaires économiques**

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Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Jeremy Roberts
Ian Arthur, Stan Cho
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Chris Glover, Christine Hogarth
Logan Kanapathi, Daryl Kramp
Natalia Kusendova, Amarjot Sandhu
Mike Schreiner, Dave Smith
Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens
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Roman Baber, Rudy Cuzzetto
Amy Fee, Vincent Ke
Andrea Khanjin, Marie-France Lalonde
Taras Natyshak, Rick Nicholls
Jeremy Roberts, Marit Stiles
John Vanthof
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Jocelyn McCauley

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Roman Baber, Aris Babikian
Nathalie Des Rosiers, Jill Dunlop
Parm Gill, Lindsey Park
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Sara Singh, Monique Taylor
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Suze Morrison, Michael Parsa
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