

Legislative  
Assembly  
of Ontario



Assemblée  
législative  
de l'Ontario

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**Official Report  
of Debates  
(Hansard)**

No. 28

**Journal  
des débats  
(Hansard)**

N<sup>o</sup> 28

1<sup>st</sup> Session  
42<sup>nd</sup> Parliament  
Wednesday  
26 September 2018

1<sup>re</sup> session  
42<sup>e</sup> législature  
Mercredi  
26 septembre 2018

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Speaker: Honourable Ted Arnott  
Clerk: Todd Decker

Président : L'honorable Ted Arnott  
Greffier : Todd Decker

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Toronto ON M7A 1A2  
Telephone 416-325-7400; fax 416-325-7430  
Published by the Legislative Assembly of Ontario



Service du Journal des débats et d'interprétation  
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Téléphone, 416-325-7400; télécopieur, 416-325-7430  
Publié par l'Assemblée législative de l'Ontario

ISSN 1180-2987

# CONTENTS / TABLE DES MATIÈRES

Wednesday 26 September 2018 / Mercredi 26 septembre 2018

## ORDERS OF THE DAY / ORDRE DU JOUR

<b>Comité spécial sur la transparence financière / Select Committee on Financial Transparency</b>	
M. Michael Mantha.....	1215
Miss Monique Taylor.....	1216
Mr. John Fraser.....	1218
Mr. John Vanthof.....	1220
Ms. Peggy Sattler.....	1222
Debate deemed adjourned.....	1224

## INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS / PRÉSENTATION DES VISITEURS

Hon. Sylvia Jones.....	1224
Mr. David Piccini.....	1224
Mr. Michael Parsa.....	1224
Mr. Lorne Coe.....	1224
Mme Nathalie Des Rosiers.....	1224
Mr. Vincent Ke.....	1224
<b>Wearing of jersey</b>	
Hon. Lisa MacLeod.....	1224

## ORAL QUESTIONS / QUESTIONS ORALES

<b>Privatization of public assets</b>	
Ms. Andrea Horwath.....	1224
Hon. Peter Bethlenfalvy.....	1225
<b>Privatization of public assets</b>	
Ms. Andrea Horwath.....	1225
Hon. Christine Elliott.....	1225
<b>Privatization of public assets</b>	
Ms. Andrea Horwath.....	1226
Hon. Peter Bethlenfalvy.....	1226
<b>Government accountability</b>	
Mr. Michael Parsa.....	1227
Hon. Peter Bethlenfalvy.....	1227
<b>Anti-racism activities</b>	
Ms. Laura Mae Lindo.....	1227
Hon. Michael A. Tibollo.....	1227
<b>Government accountability</b>	
Mr. Stan Cho.....	1228
Hon. Victor Fedeli.....	1228
<b>Anti-racism activities</b>	
Ms. Marit Stiles.....	1228
Hon. Lisa M. Thompson.....	1228

## Curriculum

Ms. Kathleen O. Wynne.....	1229
Hon. Lisa M. Thompson.....	1229

## Energy policies

Mr. Randy Pettapiece.....	1229
Hon. Greg Rickford.....	1229

## Injured workers

Mr. Wayne Gates.....	1230
Hon. Laurie Scott.....	1230

## Energy policies

Mr. Sam Oosterhoff.....	1230
Hon. Greg Rickford.....	1230

## Child care

Ms. Doly Begum.....	1231
Hon. Lisa M. Thompson.....	1231

## Climate change

Mr. Sheref Sabawy.....	1231
Hon. Rod Phillips.....	1232

## Child protection

Miss Monique Taylor.....	1232
Hon. Christine Elliott.....	1232

## Assistance to farmers

Ms. Jill Dunlop.....	1233
Hon. Ernie Hardeman.....	1233

## Horse racing industry

Mr. Percy Hatfield.....	1233
Hon. Victor Fedeli.....	1233

## Notice of dissatisfaction

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott).....	1234
------------------------------------	------

## Visitor

Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens.....	1234
-------------------------------------	------

## INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS / PRÉSENTATION DES VISITEURS

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott).....	1234
Mr. Mike Schreiner.....	1234

## MEMBERS' STATEMENTS / DÉCLARATIONS DES DÉPUTÉS

## Anti-racism activities

Ms. Jill Andrew.....	1234
----------------------	------

## Canadian Police Memorial Ride to Remember

Mr. Prabmeet Singh Sarkaria.....	1235
----------------------------------	------

## Hotel Dieu Shaver Health and Rehabilitation Centre

Mr. Jeff Burch.....	1235
---------------------	------

**International Plowing Match**

Mr. Rick Nicholls..... 1235

**Curriculum**

Ms. Catherine Fife..... 1235

**Sault Area Hospital**

Mr. Ross Romano ..... 1236

**Emergency services**

Mme France G  linas ..... 1236

**Home care**

Mr. Kaleed Rasheed..... 1236

**Ronald Dancey**

Mrs. Belinda Karahalios..... 1237

**Visitor**

Mr. Roman Baber..... 1237

**INTRODUCTION OF BILLS /  
D  P  T DES PROJETS DE LOI****Human Rights Code Amendment Act, 2018, Bill 35,  
Mme Des Rosiers / Loi de 2018 modifiant le Code  
des droits de la personne, projet de loi 35, Mme Des  
Rosiers**

First reading agreed to..... 1237

Mme Nathalie Des Rosiers..... 1237

**STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY  
AND RESPONSES / D  CLARATIONS  
MINIST  RIELLES ET R  PONSES****Concussions**

Hon. Sylvia Jones..... 1237

Ms. Catherine Fife..... 1238

Mr. John Fraser ..... 1239

**PETITIONS / P  TITIONS****Landfill**

Mr. John Vanthof ..... 1239

**Curriculum**

Mr. Mike Schreiner ..... 1240

**Soins de longue dur  e / Long-term care**

M. Taras Natyshak ..... 1240

**Discrimination**

Mme Nathalie Des Rosiers..... 1240

**Services for persons with disabilities**

Mr. Percy Hatfield..... 1240

**Northern health services**

Mme France G  linas ..... 1241

**Curriculum**

Ms. Catherine Fife..... 1241

**Affordable housing**

Mr. Percy Hatfield..... 1241

**Curriculum**

Mr. Taras Natyshak ..... 1241

**Indigenous affairs**

Ms. Catherine Fife..... 1242

**Gasoline prices**

Mme France G  linas ..... 1242

**ORDERS OF THE DAY / ORDRE DU JOUR****Select Committee on Financial Transparency**

Mrs. Robin Martin..... 1242

Mr. Peter Tabuns ..... 1245

Mr. Ross Romano..... 1247

Ms. Catherine Fife..... 1249

Mr. Bill Walker ..... 1252

Ms. Jennifer K. French..... 1256

Debate deemed adjourned ..... 1258

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY  
OF ONTARIO

Wednesday 26 September 2018

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE  
DE L'ONTARIO

Mercredi 26 septembre 2018

*The House met at 0900.*

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

ORDERS OF THE DAY

COMITÉ SPÉCIAL SUR LA  
TRANSPARENCE FINANCIÈRE  
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 Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** When we last debated this matter, the member for Algoma–Manitoulin had the floor. I recognize the member for Algoma–Manitoulin.

**M. Michael Mantha:** C'est de valeur que je n'ai pas eu la chance de finir mon discours hier. Je voulais finir en reconnaissant tous les députés qui se sont joints à nous au lever du drapeau pour la journée de la francophonie.

Savez-vous les commentaires qu'on a reçus sur Twitter et puis sur Facebook? C'était un beau cadeau : les gens ont vu que les problèmes partisans avaient été mis de côté, et c'était tellement plaisant de voir tous les députés ensemble en train de sourire. Il y a eu plusieurs commentaires qui ont été mis sur l'Internet à cet égard. Je voulais juste dire aux gens : merci de nous avoir rejoint sur les terrains, et puis bonne journée de francophonie aux gens à travers de ma circonscription d'Algoma–Manitoulin.

Avec ça, je veux dire un beau gros bonjour à ma belle petite cousine, Chantal Mantha, qui est à Dubreuilville ce matin. Bonjour, ma belle Chantal. Je veux dire bonjour à M. et M<sup>me</sup> Desgagnes à Elliot Lake. Merci de nous rejoindre ce matin.

Bon, on commence où j'ai laissé hier : beaucoup de mes commentaires que j'ai faits hier étaient au regard de la relation entre nous comme l'opposition officielle et ce que que nous avons à offrir, notre devoir, et les voix qu'on doit emporter de tous les Ontariens envers ce gouvernement. Puis, le devoir du gouvernement—qui n'est pas seulement élu d'un groupe sélect à travers la province. Ils sont là pour être le gouvernement pour toute la province : non seulement un peu de la province, mais tous les gens qui ont participé à l'élection qu'on a eue.

Les commentaires qu'on a faits hier—on regardait les changements ou l'amendement que le député de Timmins et notre parti ont mis envers ce morceau de loi. On regarde

à avoir une bonne représentation, une représentation équitable qui va avoir des points de vue de différentes façons.

Comme j'ai mentionné hier, c'est le devoir du gouvernement de non pas seulement écouter leurs voix et leurs messages. Un gouvernement qui se démontre comme un gouvernement chef et un gouvernement progressiste va regarder—et puis va admettre qu'ils n'ont pas toutes les réponses. Ils vont être capables de dire : « Sais-tu quoi? Je pense qu'on devrait ouvrir le panneau, retirer les rideaux pour faire certain qu'on peut avoir toutes les informations nécessaires. »

Parce que, il faut qu'on se rappelle. Quand il y a eu le scandale pour les « gas plants », quand il y a eu plusieurs autres projets questionnables qui avaient été portés de l'avant par le gouvernement libéral, je me rappelle que le membre de Nipissing, qui était le critique des finances dans ces temps-là—notre critique était le membre pour Timiskaming–Cochrane—mais aussi il y avait le membre pour Toronto–Danforth et puis il y avait le membre, de notre bord, de Kitchener–Waterloo. Ils ont tellement bien travaillé ensemble pour découvrir plusieurs problèmes, des affaires cachées. Ils ont découvert ensemble comment poser leurs questions à travers les ouvrages du comité.

C'est essentiellement ça qu'on demande à travers l'amendement : retirez les rideaux. Regardons ensemble ce qu'on peut poser et comment on peut travailler ensemble pour découvrir ce qui est arrivé avec les libéraux. Puis, on le dit, et on l'a tout le temps dit : « Coudonc, ce n'est rien de nouveau, là, ce que le ministre des Finances a sorti il y a deux, trois jours. » On a eu le rapport. Le rapport a été donné.

Coudonc, on était les deux sur le même bord de la Chambre. Je m'en rappelle; j'étais assis là, trois ou quatre sièges par là. Le ministre des Finances, qui est au gouvernement, était assis juste à côté de mon collègue de Timiskaming–Cochrane. Quand on a pris notre café le matin, on l'a tous vu, ce rapport. Ce n'est rien de nouveau.

Puis, avec les scandales, on se dit : « Oh, ma foi du bonyienne; on a découvert toutes sortes d'affaires. » Bien, non. On le savait. On le savait qu'il y avait au-dessus de 12 milliards de dollars en question. Ce n'est rien de nouveau.

Mais ce que le gouvernement est en train de faire, c'est de nous bouleverser avec une tellement grosse découverte pour qu'ils puissent faire exactement ce qui est leur objectif : de faire des coupures. Parce que si tu regardes leur message, ils ont des options. On a des options. Les revenus ont diminué. Ils ont déjà coupé plusieurs programmes qui contribuaient à notre économie, à des

emplois. Ils l'ont coupé, ça. Ils ont retiré des investissements dans notre système de santé. Ils ont retiré des investissements dans nos écoles.

Ce qui fait que, c'est quoi qu'ils vont faire? C'est quoi qui va être la prochaine étape qu'ils vont prendre? Quand tu les regardes, il faut que tu regardes qu'ils vont couper des services. Ceci, c'est leur justification pour prendre les actions qui sont à venir. Et puis, guettez-vous, les gens. Guettez-vous, parce qu'on va souffrir. Ça va arriver et puis ça va faire mal. Ça va faire mal. Parce qu'il y en a déjà plusieurs qui commencent à les ressentir, ces coupures-là.

Ce qui fait que quand je regarde le gouvernement, je vous suggère fortement, quand le comité sélect est établi, de regarder et puis de donner le privilège à tous les membres du comité, non pas une seule majorité. Oui, vous êtes le gouvernement majoritaire. Vous allez avoir six personnes, plus une de ces personnes-là qui va être la chaise du comité. Nous, on va en avoir trois. Mais regardez à ouvrir les rideaux, partagez une bonne information, posez toutes les questions et puis donnez les privilèges à tous les membres du comité pour faire certain qu'on arrive aux réponses qu'on veut avoir pour faire certain de ce que les libéraux ont fait à l'Ontario.

Nous autres, on n'est pas en désaccord. On est sur la même page. Mais faites certain que ça n'arrive pas aux Ontariens et Ontariennes, et puis qu'on développe des stratégies et des politiques qui vont servir les gens de l'Ontario.

**The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls):** Further debate?

**Miss Monique Taylor:** I'm shocked to see that the government isn't standing to their own motion this morning. Actually, I guess we're speaking on an amendment to the motion this morning but it's unfortunate that the government has chosen not to take their time in this Legislature to speak to it, so here I am.

**0910**

I am pleased, as always, to be able to rise in this House and to add my voice to the debates that happen here, and this morning it is on the Select Committee on Financial Transparency. Speaker, this comes hot on the heels of the minister's shocking announcement last Friday that the deficit was substantially higher than the Liberals said it would be. In other words, Elvis has died. It's new news—it's new news.

I'm not going to stand here and defend the previous Liberal government because, Lord knows, they made serious mistakes and what I believe were serious errors in judgment that were made with a view of looking after their own fortunes rather than the people of Ontario. They cancelled gas plants in Mississauga and Oakville to save a couple of seats in an election. That cost Ontarians over \$1 billion. eHealth was another scandal, another billion; and millions of waste in the absolutely inept handling of Ornge. Whether it was scandals like the gas plants, eHealth or Ornge, or perhaps bad, self-serving policies like the sell-off of Hydro One—a plan which, of course, the Conservatives are carrying on with full gusto—the Liberals have a lot to answer for. On June 7, the public let

them know, in no uncertain terms, what they thought of their actions.

But let's be honest: The announcement wasn't news to anyone. Actually, it's a bit rich for the Minister of Finance to come out and pretend that it is. We knew what the Auditor General and the Financial Accountability Officer had to say about the Liberal government's projections and their creative accounting practices. Both of those esteemed officers of the Legislature told us months ago that the deficit would be in the region of \$12 billion rather than the \$6.7 billion that the Liberals said it would be. We knew it, and the Minister of Finance knew it too.

In fact, just before the election, he raised it right here in this House—I believe from that seat just close in front of me here—that there were concerns. Just in case people don't know, it is in Hansard forever. Everything we say in this House will stay in Hansard forever. We can dig out information on whatever is said. So, for the Minister of Finance to claim that this is a big shock really is more shocking than the actual news.

The information was there for all to see. We could have moved on with that knowledge. It's not as if it's an unusual turn of events for a new government. The Liberals made the same complaint when they took over from Ernie Eves and the Conservatives. Mike Harris did it when he took over from the NDP, and when the NDP formed government, it was David Peterson's Liberals who were the culprits at that time.

But what's a little different this time is that the government decided they would spend \$1 million of public money paid to a former Liberal Premier of British Columbia to tell us what we already essentially knew. What a complete waste of money. Here we have an announcement that is setting the stage for deep cuts—cuts to hospitals, cuts to schools and cuts to transit systems—and they just throw away \$1 million on a report that was completely unnecessary for information that everyone already knew.

And they have set aside another \$30 million to take the federal government to court to challenge their carbon tax legislation. Let's set aside, for a moment, the predictions from many legal experts that the challenge will most certainly lose. Instead, let's think back to what just happened here in Ontario over the past few weeks. "How dare a judge make a ruling that goes against legislation passed by our government?" That was the Premier in one of his rages. Yet, this government sees no contradiction in going down the same road when the shoe is on the other foot.

So now, Speaker, we have a motion to appoint a Select Committee on Financial Transparency. I suppose we're actually debating the amendment to the motion that was brought forward by my good friend the member from Timmins. It's funny, Speaker; with the changes in all of our ridings, I want to say to the member from Timmins—James Bay, but he's just an urban guy now with his new boundaries. I guess he has no more trips up the coast in his airplanes to see his constituents.

Speaker, just as a reminder to this House, and in case folks are just tuning in this morning, I want to read the motion:

“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.”

That’s the full text of the motion. And, as I said, the member from Timmins has moved an amendment to the motion, which reads 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.’”

I’m certainly not opposed to financial transparency; in fact, I’m all for it. The people we serve, the people of Hamilton Mountain, who sent me here to represent them, expect their government to be transparent in all of its actions. They deserve to know how decisions are made and how public money is spent.

I’ve also been hearing quite a bit lately from the government benches about wanting to work together; to work collaboratively in opposition. I have to say, so far I haven’t seen anything from the government to back that up. We’ve seen in several circumstances where debate in this Legislature has been stifled, and not only one bill but all bills that have been brought forward have not made it to committee. But I will live in hope.

Back to the two amendments that were brought forward by the member from Timmins: They serve to make the committee more effective and facilitate a collaborative approach to policy development. If the government says they want to work together, this is one of those measures that will help us work together. So I hope that the government will support these amendments.

Speaker, I’ve had the pleasure of working on various legislative committees here at Queen’s Park and I’m a big fan of what committees can accomplish. Admittedly, my experience in this regard was probably better during the

minority government rather than in the majority years, but even then they had value.

During the last Parliament, when we had the Standing Committee on Justice Policy, we gave consideration to Bill 89. The members will remember that this bill replaced the Child and Family Services Act with the new Child, Youth and Family Services Act. There were around 300 amendments that were brought forward by the Liberals, the Conservatives and ourselves in the NDP. This was a significant result from input that was given to the committee from various members of the public, including different agencies, individuals who use those agencies, families and advocates. We also received presentations from officers of the Legislature: the Information and Privacy Commissioner and the Provincial Advocate for Children and Youth.

As I said, the Liberals were in a majority situation and they were being—well, they were being Liberals, just as Conservatives are now being Conservatives, so I was disappointed that they basically ignored the amendments that we all put forward. As well, the Conservative Party put several amendments forward during that time which were pretty much turned down by the Liberal government. I think I was able to pass one amendment out of 130. It was very frustrating, I have to tell you, Speaker.

**0920**

But they had heard the same presentations that I had heard, they’d received all the same written submissions that I had received, and many of their amendments were very similar to those that we proposed. Many didn’t go as far as I would have liked to address the issues that were raised by those presented, but that’s the way it goes. The final bill, by far, wasn’t perfect, by any means, but I think it greatly improved the lives of those it serves—and it was improved because of the work of the committee. Those who presented certainly provided much more food for thought about what needs to be done for the people we serve and the people who need protection under acts such as the Child, Youth and Family Services Act.

I was also very fortunate to sit on the Select Committee on Developmental Services. That was during the minority of the 40th Parliament. We had a Liberal Chair, a Conservative Vice-Chair, three other Liberal members, two other Conservative members and two New Democrats. We were really able to work together during that time. We were able to hear from delegations across the province of our most vulnerable population: people with disabilities. There were so many tears and so many boxes of Kleenex floating around that we shared as Liberals, as Conservatives, as New Democrats. We shared those tears. We shared the emotions that were brought before us. When we were working together to put amendments forward, we worked together. We traded off wording, because it made sense, because it was in the best interest of the people whom we were serving and whom we were talking about during that committee. That’s the work that should be done. That’s how we should be working together. We did come out with some really great recommendations. I mean, the Liberals, of course, stole the ball and ran with the recommendations

before the report was even tabled, which, quite frankly, was shameful—but they did it.

The amendments should have actually changed lives. Instead, we see many folks who are still waiting for Passport funding. We still see a very difficult transition from special services at home as a young person into adulthood, into Passport funding. We still see many young people without supportive housing so that their aging parents can live the rest of their lives with some comfort knowing that their children—their young adults, their aging adults—have a safe place to call home.

I'm hoping that the government will look back to our days on this Select Committee on Developmental Services and remember those recommendations moving forward in their time in government, what can be done to ensure that people with developmental and physical disabilities actually have a chance in this life; and that because you're disabled, it doesn't give you an automatic ticket to poverty. Because that's what we've seen existing under the Liberal government for many years.

Things didn't change after the select committee, even though we came out with a really great report. The report, I'm sure, as the government has now noticed, is under a thick cloud of dust. Hopefully, they will dust that off and make sure that the work that was done in that committee is put to good use. There's no sense in putting together a new committee if the reports are going to end up with dust, because that's how we've seen many of the reports before this House.

Before my time, there was the Select Committee on Mental Health and Addictions, and yet mental health has probably one of the highest wait-lists. It costs us billions of dollars. It puts added costs on our health care. There were good recommendations that came out of that select committee, of which many of the members are still in this House. I believe that the Minister of Health was the Chair or Vice-Chair. I know she was very active on that committee. Like I said, it was before my time. When she was in the official opposition, she raised that report several times, saying we need to get there, and yet still we have 12,000 kids on a wait-list for mental health services in the province of Ontario. We have families who are devastated by the lack of services that are available to them. We have children who are committing suicide on a regular basis. These are the types of things that happen when we don't take care of our most fundamental issues. Mental health is no different than health care; it needs to be taken care of.

So another report sitting on a shelf with a lot of dust. I hope the government is going to wipe the dust off of that and look at those recommendations. Don't do new committees to look at it again. Don't do new research papers. The work is done. The people have spoken. The people have told us their needs. Yes, we have to have different ways of moving forward in how we're going to tackle those issues, but we need to have the will to do it. We need to say that this is a priority and move it forward. Instead, we see other priorities that have come before this House recently that really don't affect people very much. A buck

a beer? I've had hangovers that lasted longer than the thrill of the buck-a-beer announcement.

It's a reality: The buck-a-beer isn't going to do anything for anyone, for the people of this province. When I was knocking on doors, people did not say to me, "My beer is too expensive." What they did say to me is: "My hydro is too expensive." "I can't afford my housing." "I can't afford my medication." "My teeth are rotting; nothing I can do about it." They didn't tell me they needed a buck-a-beer. They didn't talk about council being too big.

Hamilton is no different than Toronto. We have seen plenty of bills pass through city council that they fought on for years in Hamilton. It took 10-plus years to get the Red Hill Creek Expressway done. It took five years of—

*Interjection.*

**Miss Monique Taylor:** I'm not saying it's a bad thing. You've got to listen to everything I've got to say. It took years to build the stadium and decide where the stadium was going to be built. But those kinds of discussions, when we have opposing ends, make for better decisions. Instead of having one heavy-handed end, you have a balance. You have to listen to both sides of the equation to be able to come together to make good decisions. If people don't learn how to work together, we're never going to be able to do that.

So if Toronto city council was not able to get to the decisions that they needed to do, then it's because the decisions weren't ready for everyone to agree with; that there had to be a side of it that just wasn't working for the other side. You have to be able to work together to find the consensus. That is the job that we are given to do. Nobody sent me here with the thought that "Monique Taylor is going to change the world all by herself because she is my representative." No. They sent me here as one of all of us to be able to put my two cents forward, to be able to have a voice, to be able to work with others to get the job done.

When we have majority governments who, quite frankly—they got 40% of the vote and they have 100% of the power. Maybe that's a select committee we need: on how we're looking at our elections moving forward so that all voices, all representatives—even the Liberals, who are in the penalty box currently, their constituents sent them here to have a voice to represent them. So we really have to look at our electoral process and how it's working for the people of Ontario.

There's so much to say and 27 seconds left to go on. It's a good thing, having committees. I think we could find better use of time other than looking at information that we already know. We know that the Liberals did bad, but the Conservatives don't need to do bad while they are there just because the Liberals did. Work together. Let's actually do good things for the people of this province and move forward.

**The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls):** Further debate?

**Mr. John Fraser:** I'd like to say it's a pleasure to rise today, but it's kind of odd because I'm actually debating a motion in which our party has no participation. It's a bit odd, and it's a bit odd to be debating whether the members

of the committee can call their individual witnesses—again, not participating.

**0930**

To the member from Hamilton Mountain, yes, we are in the penalty box. I understand that very clearly. The voters of this province sent us a message. What I would like to remind people, all the members in the Legislature, is that 1.1 million people voted for Ontario Liberals. Whether we're the minivan party of seven or whether the Liberal Party—whatever the Premier wants to call us—we represent 1.1 million people and they are part of the people. Our inability to participate in this committee and fully participate in this Legislature—there's another motion going forward right now which I'm not going to debate at this point because we're on this motion. What is right and just for those people is for their voices to be able to participate in the activities of this Legislature. In respect to us being in the penalty box, we need to go and take a look back at who we are, what brought us here as a government, and where we lost our way. But that doesn't mean that, in the current Legislature, we should not participate fully and that we should not be the voice of those 1.1 million people.

Our electoral system yields results that are somewhat distorted, and previous Parliaments have precedents in addressing that. Some 1.1 million people voted for Ontario Liberals in the last election. It yielded seven seats.

**Hon. Victor Fedeli:** Not quite enough.

**Mr. John Fraser:** That's right, not quite enough.

In the last election, 2.3 million people voted for Conservatives and it yielded 76 seats. That's a distortion, and in 1999 and 2003, the Legislature led by the government at the time, a Conservative government and a Liberal government, recognized that. So our participation, like the participation of the NDP in 1999 and in 2003, is important in this Legislature, because it's not about the seven members. It's not about us as members. It's the people, as the Premier would say. I would add, all the people.

**Hon. Victor Fedeli:** For the people.

**Mr. John Fraser:** For all the people. Thank you very much, to the Minister of Finance.

I would like to say that it's very, very interesting that we're having this kind of three-act trilogy that the Minister of Finance is going through. Last Friday, the Premier and the finance minister, with language that I think they know they can't use inside this House and they used outside this House in a way that they protect themselves—they know what they're doing. So it's interesting that we had a pre-election report that the auditor reviewed. We know the accounting dispute that existed inside there—except, last Friday, the Premier and the finance minister acted like it was news. They were shocked.

Here's the interesting thing, Mr. Speaker: With this little three-act trilogy that they have got going, and the finance minister's feigned shock and dismay, if you look at the financial inquiry—it's interesting the language they use. They were calling yesterday's document an audit until the auditors told them you can't call it an audit because it's not. What's interesting to note is that inside that report, it

says you should provisionally accept the pension treatment and negotiate with the auditor what it really should be. What that is saying is, "We don't actually agree with this," and the government is accepting that.

If you look to the other piece of the trilogy, which is the public accounts—and the finance minister is straightening his tie there because he knows this—take a look at the bottom of the document and see who signed that document. You know who normally signs that document? It's the controller. The controller is a certified public accountant, a public servant responsible for living by the laws of their profession and doing their job on behalf of the people of Ontario. You know what you are not going to find on the bottom of that public accounts document? A controller's signature. The finance minister should answer for why that is, but he hasn't. It's interesting, isn't it, Mr. Finance Minister? It is very interesting.

**The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls):** I just want to remind the member of the motion that we are actually addressing this morning pertaining to select committees and that you're starting to wander somewhat. I would ask that you tighten it up and speak more specifically to the motion and the amendment to the motion. Thank you very much.

**Mr. John Fraser:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and I'm sorry that I was engaging here. The finance minister wanted me to engage, but he doesn't want me to any longer. And yes, I'm being careful. I will try to—

**Hon. Victor Fedeli:** I'm right here.

**Mr. John Fraser:** I didn't say you had gone anywhere. I just said you didn't want to talk anymore.

Mr. Speaker, I will try my best. It's just a challenge when you don't have an opportunity to participate or debate this issue, as it's going to be the solely the government and the opposition that are there.

The member from Hamilton Mountain talked about select committees on mental health services and developmental services, and many other things that we've done in the history of this province have travelled and have produced a cross-partisan product that has helped guide us as a Legislature.

You've heard me say this before, Mr. Speaker: People send us here to take care of the things that are most important to them, the things that they count on for them and their families, like hospitals, like schools, like public transit, like a clean, green electricity system, like support for the most vulnerable. That's why they send us, and we have to keep our eye on that ball.

At this select committee, those are the things that should be debated there as well as they are here, because that select committee is looking into the choices and the decisions of the last government and what they chose to invest in. If you look at the line-by-line review—not an audit—what it will tell you is that the growth in expenditures was almost zero internally in government—zero—if you factor in inflation. Where expenditures went was health care and education. Why do people send us here, Mr. Speaker? To take care of their schools, to take care of

their hospitals, to make sure their children have opportunity and success and a shot at getting a good job and a shot at a good life, to make sure—two weeks ago, when my mother had a stroke—there were people there to make sure that she would get better. That's why they send us here.

What I'm concerned about with this select committee is that we're not going to talk about that. We're not going to talk about those things that are most important to Ontarians. The fact that the voices of 1.1 million people are restricted in this Legislature, and therefore restricted in the select committee that the government has put forward, is wrong. It's simply wrong, and it goes against democratic principles. In this Legislature, we're all equal—no more.

Mr. Speaker, this select committee—

*Interjection.*

**Mr. John Fraser:** You can laugh. But it's not about me, and it's not about you.

**Mr. Roman Baber:** I didn't laugh.

**Mr. John Fraser:** You did.

The basic fact of the matter is, there's a voice here of 1.1 million people in this party, these seven members—actually, 1.4 million if you include the Green independent member. And those voices are important. You shouldn't make light of it, because one day, you may be in a position where you have the responsibility of speaking for 1.1 million people—

**Mr. Gilles Bisson:** Twice.

**Mr. John Fraser:** The member has had it twice. The interesting thing is, when it happened to the member twice, the Parliament recognized the distortion of the electoral system but, more importantly, the fact that 550,000 people voted NDP in 1999, and in 2003 it was 600,000, yielding 12.7% in 1999 and 14.6% in 2003. But the Legislature understood the importance of balance and ensuring that those distortions were recognized.

0940

**Mr. Gilles Bisson:** That's not quite what happened.

**Mr. John Fraser:** Well, they changed the standing orders in 1999 and, from a participation perspective in 2003, an accommodation was made. That's what happened. The member from Timmins—James Bay knows that.

My point is that this select committee is really just another representation of what's happening here in this Legislature. What should be happening at that select committee is what happens at all select committees, and that's that all the voices of all the people in Ontario are heard at those committees.

That select committee should also be talking about the investments that you make to build 26 new hospitals or reduce wait times or give vaccinations for kids or add money to mental health or build new schools. Those are the decisions that government makes, and at this select committee that's not going to happen. And the voices of 1.4 or 1.1 million people, however you want to add it up, are not going to be there. That's wrong.

I want to thank you for the time, Mr. Speaker.

**The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls):** Further debate?

**Mr. John Vanthof:** It's always an honour to stand in this House and speak on behalf of the people in Timiskaming—Cochrane and, today, to represent my NDP colleagues in discussing the creation of a Select Committee on Financial Transparency, proposed by the Minister of Finance.

I think most of the people here know what a select committee is, but for the 18 viewers at home, we have a lot of—and I think there's more than 18 viewers at home now, because when you have a government that seems to be willing to play with the “notwithstanding” clause of the Canadian Constitution, people are looking. That's what this government was willing to do. So at the very least, this government is increasing perhaps not voter confidence but voter interest.

**Mr. Bill Walker:** I think confidence.

**Mr. John Vanthof:** The government whip thinks that they're increasing voter confidence; we would beg to disagree.

For the folks at home and for the folks here, what is a select committee? A select committee is, in very layman's terms—and perhaps I don't understand what a select committee is; it wouldn't be the first time that I don't actually understand what goes on here. A select committee is basically a special committee struck to deal with a pertinent issue of the day—an issue that is usually non-partisan and that affects many Ontarians. The member from Hamilton Mountain did a very good job of describing one of those past select committees, the Select Committee on Developmental Services, a huge issue in this province, and not something that you're trying to score political points on.

As with many reports, unfortunately, often reports of select committees—they're done in good faith; people come to present—gather dust. I'm sure we can list select committees that have been done in good faith. There are all kinds of recommendations that the government could act on and all kinds of recommendations that, in the last 15 years, the past government did not act on.

When you have a new government, there's a good chance that they could look at those past reports and see where they could actually help people. People would be somewhat surprised because Conservative governments have this aura around them that they're into cut and slash. Perhaps this is coming again. But if they had actually looked at some of the past select committees and said: “You know what? There are some huge issues here and we're going to tackle a couple of them—things that the government missed.” But that's not what they're doing here, in our opinion, with this select committee.

From media reports and from the government's speeches, this select committee is going to be struck to figure out what happened, that the deficit is bigger than the government reported. That's basically what this select committee is for. Well, the problem with that is that we already know why the deficit is bigger than what the government reported, and so does the government. So you have to question what the true purpose is of a select committee on financial transparency to find out where the

hole in the deficit was. The Auditor General over the past few years has made it very clear in several reports where these holes were and where they are.

The first issue is, there was a severe disagreement between the government of the day—the Liberals—and the Auditor General regarding their reporting of pension funds, because the government was using pension fund assets as an asset towards bringing down their deficit. In simple terms, from what I understand, the Auditor General—I can't speak for the Auditor General, but the way I understood it, the government couldn't use that, because they didn't control those assets. Although they were named on them, they didn't control them. That's actually pretty straightforward.

The second issue the Auditor General brought forward is the fair hydro plan, which is actually a huge borrowing scheme to—

*Interjections.*

**Mr. John Vanthof:** Oh, I have to respond. I was talking about the fair hydro plan and the government House leader and also the Minister of Economic Development both commented that it was a brutal plan. I agree. It's a brutal plan. That's why we campaigned against it. That's why we wanted to stop it, and yet they're continuing with it. It's a brutal plan, and they know it's a brutal plan. They comment that it's a brutal plan. It's a huge borrowing scheme that artificially subsidizes hydro bills.

*Interjections.*

**Mr. John Vanthof:** And you've adopted it, and yet you know it's brutal.

You can't have it both ways. You can't call the government that implemented it—you said it's a brutal plan and we have to have a financial accountability select committee. You have a select committee to find out where the hole came from. You know where the hole came from. You know what it was largely caused by—in the government's own words, a brutal plan, but they are going to keep using it.

**Interjection:** Not exactly.

**Mr. John Vanthof:** That's exactly what you're doing.

What the government is going to do—we don't have a clue. No one's got a clue, actually, including them. But what they're doing right now is, they are using the Liberal fair hydro plan, which they call brutal—the government House leader is now on the record calling it a brutal plan, but he is happy to use it, as is the Minister of Economic Development.

So there's a bit of a problem in financial transparency right there, Speaker. There are some issues we should look at. But you have to wonder why they're so focused on—oh, I think I know why they're so focused, but why they're so focused on finding that hole—a big surprise, no one had ever heard of it, supposedly, but I've got a few quotes from the now Minister of Finance, who at that time was the Tory critic for finance. At that time, I was the NDP critic for finance, and I can add up to nine and a half.

From May 7, 2018, Speaker—

**Mr. Gilles Bisson:** Who said what?

**Mr. John Vanthof:** The member from Nipissing. The Conservative finance critic at the time, now the Minister of—

*Interjection.*

**Mr. John Vanthof:** I believe the Speaker is mocking my lack of a digit. Since I mock myself all the time, it doesn't bother me, Speaker. We can share that laugh together.

**0950**

Anyway, the Tory finance critic, who is now finance minister, seems completely surprised that there is a hole in the deficit, that they inherited a bigger deficit than they were planning. He is shell-shocked. That's why this select committee has to be struck: because they are so shell-shocked by this hole in the deficit.

In the words of the member from Nipissing on May 7, 2018: “Speaker, here we have got the Auditor General telling us that the government has given us two sets of numbers that are wrong: one was all about pension numbers, where they added too much, and one was about the so-called fair hydro plan, where they didn't add enough. Both stretched the credulity of the numbers. She said that it appears that there's money when there isn't—that's our auditor. She is offering that she may give an adverse opinion. That means: ‘I will not sign the government's book.’ She's given us what's called in accounting a qualified opinion for two different years in a row. It's the first time in the history of our province that we got a qualified opinion. What that means is, ‘I don't really trust the books. You can get away with it, but I don't really trust them. I'm going to show you what I think is wrong.’ She has done that. This time, she said, ‘If you put that nonsense in your books again, one more time, I am giving an adverse opinion.’ That's exactly what the auditor has told us.” So this wasn't a surprise to the government despite their claims to be so.

What worries me is that this government—it's a new government; they're supposed to be new and fresh, but what they're doing is, instead of governing responsibly, as people were hoping, they're using committees as public relations exercises. They want to search for information, a de facto witch hunt—and there are lots of things to find for the government. They want to search for information that we've already got for public relations purposes, for messaging, so they can cut and slash. That's basically what they want to do.

This select committee could have a purpose. It could have a much more valid purpose if we actually allowed the select committee to look at not just the past government, but the practices of governments, including the current government. Then the select committee would have a much broader view and could actually fix some of the problems that are happening.

One of the roots of the problems that are happening and that happened with the Liberals—I remember when I first got here, it was the Ornge scandal. Remember the Ornge scandal? And then the gas plants scandal? They had lots of scandals. One of the reasons that they had so many scan-

dals is because they tried to hide things from the Legislature. They wanted to go around the Legislature, and that was after 15 years of being in government.

These guys, the present government, haven't been in for—what, five months?

*Interjection.*

**Mr. John Vanthof:** Three months—and they're doing exactly the same things.

Anyone who serves wants to lead. This is a hard job to get elected. It's a hard job to stay elected, and I don't believe that anyone runs for jobs like this for the wrong reasons. We all run because we want to help our fellow Ontarians.

But when the governing party starts out as arrogant as the last government ended, you know you're in big problems. The government House leader and the government whip are hurt. They're mortally wounded. Their pride has been hurt. But they themselves know that when you have emergency sessions to ram things through without using the Legislature, they should be hurt, because they know better, Speaker.

We are looking at this select committee. We have proposed a few changes to actually make it work. The government won the election. I may not like it, but that's the reality. And because they won the election, they have the right to put forward their mandate. But if they really stop and think about it and if they are really serious about getting to the bottom of what has happened to governments—why things have gone wrong in the past—and if they really want to make sure that things don't go wrong in the future with their mandate, they should actually vote for our amendments to broaden the role of this committee, to actually look at the functioning of governments over time—not just a snapshot, but over time.

I'll give you an example. There has just been a report. It was supposed to be an audit, but now it's not an audit. It wasn't a surprise. It's, "Let's sell more things off from the government; sell off the LCBO." That's a view. The last time we did this—let's look at the 407 and see what would have been better. Then we can have a view: Is it a good idea or is it not a good idea?

Another thing that I hope this government takes to heart is that we have an Auditor General's office—very credible, the Auditor General. We have a Financial Accountability Officer and office—very credible. I would hope that this government actually helps these independent officers and makes sure that they have enough staff to do their work adequately. Governments, after they're in a while, don't tend to like the Auditor General much, because the Auditor General and the Financial Accountability Officer point out problems. But it's not to hurt the government, because, guess what? Every government is going to have problems. When you run a big show, you have problems.

But creating committees—it's worth thinking about if we need to broaden the scope. But we have to make sure, and this government has to work with the independent officers that we have. The government House leader has a great relationship with the Auditor General. I hope that

that relationship stays, and I hope that they respect her office enough to make sure that it's adequately funded to do the job she needs to do. That will be the test. That's a fine detail, but that will be the test.

It's the same with the Financial Accountability Officer. They perform a vital role, an important role.

The Auditor General has already performed the role that this select committee is supposed to do under the narrow mandate, because the Auditor General has already identified where that fiscal hole is. She has already done that. Can she comment on how that happened, politically? No. That's why we need to broaden the scope: to make sure that that doesn't occur within our system regardless of who's in power.

**1000**

That's why I strongly urge the government to vote for the amendments we've put forward to ensure that that Select Committee on Financial Transparency, I believe it's called, actually does what people would hope it would do—that it would help the Legislature, in future, to correct problems that are happening in government.

If it's just going to be a witch hunt for—and there are lots of things. You don't have to try hard to do a witch hunt on the Liberals; there's lots of stuff. But you won the election. It's time to make sure—

*Interjection.*

**Mr. Bill Walker:** Speaking of—

**Mr. John Vanthof:** Where was that masked man?

It's time that we actually look at how our system is working so those problems don't happen again, because a lot of those things are going to—if Ontarians and your party think that they're not going to happen with you, we're all going to be sadly disappointed, and no one more than your government, because you're not going to get the mandate that you think you deserve for the second time.

**The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls):** Further debate?

**Ms. Peggy Sattler:** I am pleased to rise today to participate in the debate on the amendments to the motion that was moved by the government to establish a Select Committee on Financial Transparency. I want to begin by congratulating the government for finally talking about committees. This is the first time that this government has shown any kind of interest in moving anything to a committee process.

Based on my five years in this Legislature, I know how important committees can be. I know how valuable it is when you open up government policies and decisions and invite the public to come to express their views about what the government is doing, maybe propose some amendments to what the government is doing and bring new ideas to the table. That allows us, as MPPs who sit on these committees, to bring forward amendments, ideas and suggestions into this place during debate, and it improves the decisions that come out of this Legislature.

I want to be very clear that the amendments that we have proposed to the government's motion on this establishment of a Select Committee on Financial Transparency are grounded in our experience, our awareness of how

committee processes should work and the kinds of processes that improve decision-making in this place. That is why we believe very strongly that this committee should not just be looking backwards; this committee should also be looking forwards.

Currently, the motion that was brought forward by the government calls on the committee to investigate and report on the accounting practices, decision-making and policy objectives of the previous government. All that this government is proposing to do right now is to look backwards and to see the circumstances and the decisions that led to the \$15-billion deficit that we heard about last week. We're saying that instead of just looking backwards, we should also be looking forwards. We should be considering the decisions that have been made so far by the current government, because those decisions have been very much affected by the decisions that were made by the past government.

**Mr. Gilles Bisson:** Full transparency.

**Ms. Peggy Sattler:** Exactly, we need full transparency, both in what happened before but also in what is currently going on in this province.

The second amendment that we have moved is in terms of the people who will present to this committee, who will be called before the committee to make depositions. Currently the motion states, "That the committee have the power to send for persons, papers and things." Now, it also states that the Conservatives have a majority of members on the committee. So when the motion says, "The committee shall have the power," what it really means is that the Conservatives shall have this power. We are saying that each member of the committee—including the three members of the official opposition who will be members of this committee—should be authorized to independently call witnesses before the committee. That's because we may have different views on who would be important, who would bring an important perspective to the table, whose voices should be heard.

We're really trying to help this government out, quite frankly, Speaker. They claim to be a government for the people. Well, they have shown that they are only interested in some people. When you allow the opposition members who are sitting on the committee to also participate in determining which witnesses would be really useful in bringing a new perspective, new ideas—we may have a different list of people than this government has in mind. That's why our amendment is so important.

Speaker, I want to speak for a few minutes about my own experience on a select committee and why I feel so strongly that these amendments that we've proposed would be helpful in terms of the process of decision-making. I sat on the Select Committee on Sexual Violence and Harassment. That was a committee that was established by a motion of this House. It included members from all three parties. Now, there was some debate at the time of the establishment of that committee about the number of members. We felt very strongly that the role of a select committee is supposed to be non-partisan. It's not supposed to reflect the will of the government majority; it

is supposed to be a collaborative process that involves equally all of the parties in this Legislature.

The government of the time, the Liberal government, insisted that its members have a majority on the committee, so what we ended up with was a committee that was composed of—I think there were five Liberal members, three Conservative members and two NDP members. So, Speaker, we had some concerns going into that process that it might end up reflecting the view of the majority of the Liberal members who were on the committee, but I have to say that that select committee process did in the end work well.

We were able—the Conservative members who sat on the committee and the NDP members who sat on the committee—to make decisions about what witnesses would be called, where we would travel, who we would reach out to, where we would advertise that this committee was in place in Ontario, so that people could have an opportunity to submit written submissions if they wanted. That was really important.

That committee, the Select Committee on Sexual Violence and Harassment, did not only look at the past policies and decisions of the government. It very much was looking forward to try to identify what government could do in the era of #MeToo. Yesterday we heard the charges laid against Bill Cosby. At that time, there were just the revelations about Jian Ghomeshi and Harvey Weinstein, so the context of that committee was very important. But we wanted to ensure that the recommendations that would come out of that select committee would very much be looking forward, would very much be looking at how we can prevent women—mainly women—from being victims of sexual violence and sexual harassment. That is what a select committee should do: It should be looking forward. It should be developing recommendations that are going to help people in Ontario.

#### 1010

Frankly, Speaker, when I look at the parameters that the government has brought forward for this select committee, I'm not sure that they are that interested in looking forward and in trying to make things better for the people of this province. It seems to me, in many ways, that this very first effort of this government to take anything to committee is showboating. It really is. It's just to create this political theatre so that they can beat up on the previous government without taking any responsibility for how they are going to move forward and fix things for Ontarians in the future.

The only people who seem to be surprised by the size of this deficit are this Premier and the members of his caucus. Everybody else in this province—certainly, us on this side, the official opposition—were very much aware that the deficit was not what the Liberals were reporting. In fact, the now Minister of Finance knew it himself. Just prior to the election, back in May 2018, he stood in this place—he was on this side at the time. Right from Hansard, this is what he said: "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”—

**Mr. Gilles Bisson:** Surprise.

**Ms. Peggy Sattler:** Yes, exactly.

So, Speaker, this government knew from when the Auditor General first reported her findings, from when the Financial Accountability Officer confirmed the auditor's findings. This government knew very well that the deficit that the Liberals were reporting was not exactly as it should have been.

What this government has not acknowledged is that part of the reason that the deficit was so much larger than what the Liberals were reporting was because of the fair hydro plan. My colleague the member for Timiskaming—Cochrane has already talked about that. We know that this government, during the campaign and still, has embraced the Liberals' fair hydro plan, which is going to cost this province an extra \$40 billion.

If we're going to talk about financial transparency, we should be talking about that extra \$40 billion that is going to be put on to taxpayers, to citizens in this province, to children who will grow up and inherit this debt—

**Interjection:** Including Conservative children.

**Ms. Peggy Sattler:** Exactly—including Conservative children.

The people of this province will be burdened with that policy decision of that government for generations.

**Mr. Gilles Bisson:** And they've adopted it.

**Ms. Peggy Sattler:** They've embraced it. They're trumpeting it. They are championing it.

**Mr. Gilles Bisson:** Tories are Liberals in a hurry.

**Ms. Peggy Sattler:** Exactly.

Speaker, these are the kinds of things we should be talking about.

We also know that people had 15 years of Liberal government. What I heard repeatedly during the campaign was that people wanted to turn a corner. They wanted to move on. They wanted to fix health care. They wanted to get some affordable housing built. They wanted transit systems. They wanted solutions to be brought forward to deal with these very pressing issues. I'm really worried that this committee is not going to give us those solutions.

I'm going to wrap up my comments now because I see you've given me a signal.

**The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls):** Thank you very much.

*Debate deemed adjourned.*

**The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls):** When the debate does resume, you will have time left to continue, should you choose to do so.

It is now 10:15. This House will stand recessed until 10:30.

*The House recessed from 1015 to 1030.*

## INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

**Hon. Sylvia Jones:** Good morning, everyone. I would like to introduce Gordon Stringer, who has joined us in the gallery this morning. Mr. Stringer is, of course, Rowan's dad. As we all know, today is Rowan's Law Day. Rowan was a 17-year-old Ottawa varsity rugby player who died after sustaining multiple concussions in May 2013. Gordon joins us here at Queen's Park on this very special day to honour Rowan's memory, raise awareness and help improve concussion safety. I invite all of you to join us on the grand staircase immediately following question period for a group photo with Mr. Stringer to mark Rowan's Law Day.

**Mr. David Piccini:** I'd like to welcome to the Legislature today a friend and constituent of mine from Newcastle, Clarington: Gerry Black, who's sitting up in the gallery.

**Mr. Michael Parsa:** I would like to welcome to the House today members and representatives from Life Sciences Ontario. I would like to thank them for taking the time to be here today and I hope that my colleagues in this House will join them this evening at their reception in room 228 from 5 to 7 p.m.

**Mr. Lorne Coe:** It's my pleasure to welcome to the Ontario Legislature Theresa and Michael Montagnese. Welcome to Queen's Park.

**M<sup>me</sup> Nathalie Des Rosiers:** I'd like to welcome to the Legislature Janet Cameron, Cynthia Phillips, Wendy Showler and Monica Leask, who are girlfriends of Camille Therriault-Power, the mother of my EA, Mary-Liz Power, and a constituent of Ottawa—Vanier. Bienvenue à Queen's Park. Welcome to Queen's Park.

**Mr. Vincent Ke:** I would like to recognize Derek Lin, a grade 8 student from my riding of Don Valley North. He attends Don Valley Middle School. He is serving a two-week term as a legislative page and is our page captain in the House today. Welcome to Queen's Park and I hope you enjoy your time here.

## WEARING OF JERSEY

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** The Minister of Children, Community and Social Services has informed me she has a point of order.

**Hon. Lisa MacLeod:** Speaker, I am seeking unanimous consent in order to wear my Rowan's Law jersey today. I'm hoping the House will indulge me.

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** Is there unanimous consent? Agreed.

## ORAL QUESTIONS

### PRIVATIZATION OF PUBLIC ASSETS

**Ms. Andrea Horwath:** Speaker, my first question is to the Deputy Premier. The government spent weeks setting the table for deep cuts in our schools, hospitals and the services that families rely on, and yesterday we learned

that they're also revving up for a fire sale of public assets to their wealthy friends on Bay Street. The latest public relations exercise was unveiled yesterday by the chair of Treasury Board, a report calling for deep cuts to services and a massive sell-off of public assets.

Earlier this week I asked the Premier what he was going to cut, but now I have another question: What is his government going to sell?

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** Deputy Premier?

**Hon. Christine Elliott:** President of the Treasury Board.

**Hon. Peter Bethlenfalvy:** Through you, Mr. Speaker, to the Leader of the Opposition: Our government is working day and night to restore trust and accountability to Ontario's finances. While the new deficit party believes that the government can rack up unlimited amounts of debt without consequences, the reality is, it cannot.

In fact, the member for Hamilton West–Ancaster–Dundas earlier this month said, “Everyone knows the Liberals left us with a mess and a feud with our Auditor General.” We know the Liberals left us a mess and, unlike the NDP, we are fixing it for the people. We have fixed public accounts. We have fixed the feud with the Auditor General. Our government's priority is to ensure that the fiscal stability of this province exists while protecting core public services now and into the future.

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** Supplementary.

**Ms. Andrea Horwath:** Speaker, what the people can't trust is a government that doesn't tell them what they're about to do during an election but goes ahead and does it after an election.

The Premier did not run on selling public assets, and it wasn't in the throne speech either, but yesterday the President of Treasury Board was happily telling reporters that he's ready to get started. Where have I heard this before, Speaker?

Given the history of disastrous privatization in this province, does the Deputy Premier really believe that a fire sale of public assets makes a lick of sense?

**Hon. Peter Bethlenfalvy:** Our government has been working hard for the people of Ontario and has been restoring trust and accountability to government. EY had a mandate to consider all options and to present those to government. They did an excellent job and left no stone unturned. While the opposition has been breathlessly fear-mongering, we have been looking for solutions. The line-by-line audit presented some solutions to government. Just because an option was presented to the government doesn't mean it will happen.

What I can say is this: We are not necessarily for or against privatization; we are for the people. Every choice we make will be to modernize and transform government for the people so that they can continue to receive high-quality public service now and into the future.

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

**Ms. Andrea Horwath:** Well, Speaker, I have to say that the opposition doesn't have to fear-monger; the government is doing it themselves. The government is doing it themselves.

Families have seen this movie before. It never ends well for everyday people, but it ends well for well-connected insiders of governments. The last Conservative government never campaigned on selling the 407, but they did it anyway and stuck drivers with the bill—a bill they continue to pay today. In 2014, the Liberals ran an election campaign insisting that they were not going to privatize Hydro One, and within months they were doing exactly that.

Is Doug Ford pulling a Kathleen Wynne here—

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** We have to refer to the Premier by “the Premier.”

**Ms. Andrea Horwath:** Thank you, Speaker—springing a sell-off of public assets on voters mere weeks after an election where it was never mentioned once?

**Hon. Peter Bethlenfalvy:** The goal of the line-by-line audit was not just to fulfill a balance-sheet commitment but to ensure that vital services meet the needs and expectations of the people.

Ontario has accumulated the highest subnational debt of any jurisdiction in the world at \$338 billion. On the current path, our shared prosperity is not assured. Action must be taken.

Our government is going to use the line-by-line audit as a guide as we move forward to transform programs and modernize services to ensure sustainability and value for money. We will transform government into a modern institution that serves the people and, by doing so, will create a more sustainable Ontario for this generation and future generations.

#### PRIVATIZATION OF PUBLIC ASSETS

**Ms. Andrea Horwath:** My next question is also for the Deputy Premier. The Conservatives shed crocodile tears when the previous government sold off Hydro One. Now they have the corner offices, and they're keeping the Liberals' privatization scheme in place.

1040

Will the Deputy Premier rule out further sell-offs of shares of Hydro One and other electricity assets like Ontario Power Generation, or is that one of the many things this Premier is ready to sell?

**Hon. Christine Elliott:** As the President of the Treasury Board said, we are not pro-privatization; we are pro the people. We have been working since we became government to restore trust and accountability to Ontario's finances. While the official opposition might believe they can rack up untended, unqualified amounts of money without consequences, the reality is, they cannot.

In fact, the member for Hamilton West–Ancaster–Dundas earlier this month said that everyone knows the Liberals left us with a mess and a feud with our Auditor General. Well, we know and the people of Ontario know that the Liberals left us with an enormous mess, and unlike the official opposition, we are working to fix it for the people. We've fixed the public accounts. We've fixed the feud with the Auditor General. Our government's priority

is to ensure the fiscal stability of this province while ensuring high-quality public services like health care, now and into the future.

*Interjections.*

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

**Ms. Andrea Horwath:** Well, Speaker, the LCBO brings in \$2 billion annually for the people and families of Ontario, yet the Conservatives' high-priced consultants now say that they could sell it for a one-time cash payout.

Will the Deputy Premier rule out the sale of the LCBO, or is this yet another public asset that this Premier is ready to sell?

**Hon. Christine Elliott:** EY had a mandate to consider all options and present those options to the government, and they did an excellent job and left no stone unturned. That's what we need to do in order to modernize government.

Just because we've been doing things the same old way year after year doesn't mean it's the right thing to do. But it also doesn't mean that we are going to accept all of the options that have been presented. There are many options contained in the report, if you take the time to read it, and just because an option was presented to us doesn't mean that we're going to take them up on it.

Again, what I can say is that we are not pro-privatization; we are pro the people. We are going to make decisions that are in the best interests of the people of Ontario based on what we hear from them and to make sure that our system is going to be sustainable now and into the future, because we are on a cliff right now. We need to make sure that we can have a system that people can rely on. As Minister of Health and Long-Term Care, that is what my goal is.

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

**Ms. Andrea Horwath:** I'm glad the Deputy Premier knows what a mandate is. They don't have one to sell off public assets. They do not have a mandate to sell off public assets.

Four years ago, an arrogant, out-of-touch government that didn't campaign on selling public assets turned around and did just that. Four years later, an arrogant government that didn't campaign on the sell-off of hydro, the LCBO or other public assets is floating the idea of public asset fire sales. From the 407 to Hydro One, we have seen this play out over and over and over again. With privatization, the government's friends on Bay Street make a fortune and the families of this province pay the price, each and every time.

The Premier did not campaign on selling off private assets. Why is he considering it now?

**Hon. Christine Elliott:** Well, Mr. Speaker, I would say, through you to the leader of the official opposition, we certainly do know what our mandate is. That's what got us elected on June 7. We are here for the people. We're going to be making decisions to make life more affordable for people so they can find jobs, to lower their hydro rates, to lower their gas rates. That is what we are delivering on and that's what we're going to continue to do in the future.

We are going to find efficiencies in government. That is what it's all about: modernizing government, modernizing the way that we do things. It's all for the people to make sure we can have sustainable essential services now and into the future for our children and our grandchildren.

## PRIVATIZATION OF PUBLIC ASSETS

**Ms. Andrea Horwath:** My next question is also for the government, Speaker, but I would start with a recommendation that they find a thesaurus, because "modernization" and "transformation" are the same words that that government used to privatize public assets. A thesaurus might be useful.

Yesterday the President of the Treasury Board said that the government—this is to the Deputy Premier—would be willing to sell off public assets if "it made sense." Does the President of the Treasury Board think that it made sense—I'm sorry, this is actually to the Treasury Board president—to sell off Hydro One and the 407? Did that make sense?

**Hon. Peter Bethlenfalvy:** Well, Mr. Speaker, it might be a good idea for the Leader of the Opposition to actually read the EY report because there's actually no mention of selling off the LCBO in the report—48 pages. It would help starting there. In fact, what the report did do is talk about ideas to transform government and savings, ongoing savings. In fact, there were 11 other categories, not just one-time savings.

It behooves us, for the people of Ontario, to look at all options. The third-party report has presented a range of ideas that other provinces have already looked at and executed to modernize and transform government, to provide services at a higher quality point and a lower price point. What a novel concept. So, Mr. Speaker, I encourage the official opposition to read the report. I'll answer their questions then.

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** Supplementary.

**Ms. Andrea Horwath:** Families have been burned by these sell-offs time and time again. The Conservatives promised change and now they're playing from Kathleen Wynne's obfuscation and privatization playbook. Why—

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** I'm going to ask the member to withdraw.

**Ms. Andrea Horwath:** Withdraw, Speaker.

The Conservatives promised change and now they're playing from the former government's privatization playbook. Why does the chair of the Treasury Board think that his fire sale of assets will be any different than the fiasco around the Conservative 407 sell-off or the Liberal Hydro One sell-off?

**Hon. Peter Bethlenfalvy:** Again I recommend the official opposition read the report, because it's a wealth of great ideas.

You know, Mr. Speaker, we don't have a monopoly on good ideas just in this room. We reached out to all Ontarians, including our Ontario public service, and I'm pleased to report that we received over 26,000 ideas from Ontarians on how to modernize this government and move forward.

We don't need the same old, same old. That's not going to move us forward. That's not going to allow us to find the efficiencies to provide the financial foundation to provide the core services that Ontarians expect from this government. We will act now, Mr. Speaker.

#### GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY

**Mr. Michael Parsa:** My question is to the President of the Treasury Board. Mr. Speaker, our government has taken unprecedented steps in recent months to restore trust and accountability in government finances. This is what we promised to the people of Ontario and this is what we're delivering on. In fact, it is my understanding that the line-by-line review was the most thorough review of the province's books ever undertaken in Ontario's history, with more than half a million lines of government spending 15 years, which spanned 15 years.

Along the way, our government hasn't forgotten how important it is to listen to the people and to have an open government. That is why the Planning for Prosperity consultations, which closed last Friday, also fed into the audit. Can the President of the Treasury Board please inform the House how the Planning for Prosperity consultations were taken into account during the line-by-line review?

**Hon. Peter Bethlenfalvy:** Thank you to the member for that very thoughtful question. Mr. Speaker, let me be clear: The financial issues facing this province are not problems solely impacting one party or government. This is a 14-million-person problem. Every woman, man and child in this province is impacted by government debt.

That is why we launched the Planning for Prosperity consultations and asked EY to integrate the results of the broad consultation with the people into their assessment. The consultation generated more than 15,000 survey results from Ontarians who are hungry for a government that governs differently. Our consultation with the people is central to what we were elected to do. Our government is not here just to fulfill a balance sheet commitment; we are here to ensure that vital services meet the needs and expectations of the people, now and into the future.

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** Supplementary.

**Mr. Michael Parsa:** I would like to thank the President of the Treasury Board for that informative answer.

1050

Speaker, the government committed to changing how things work at Queen's Park so that we could do better to serve the people of Ontario. The answers from the President of the Treasury Board make it clear that our government for the people is delivering on our promises.

Where the Liberals were secretive, we are open and transparent. Where the Liberals shunned consultations with people, we have embraced them. And as per the Auditor General's report, where the Liberals manipulated the public accounts, we have corrected them.

Can the President of the Treasury Board please inform the House as to what other insights the line-by-line review offered into the Liberal spending spree?

**Hon. Peter Bethlenfalvy:** Thank you again to the member from Aurora–Oak Ridges–Richmond Hill for that excellent question.

We have a massive challenge ahead of us, but we also now have a blueprint for our path forward. What the audit shows is that we must acknowledge that reckless spending is the least compassionate path that any government can take, regardless of their intentions, because it jeopardizes the long-term sustainability of the core services of government. For instance, the review shows that if only the Liberals had showed some restraint and held expenditures to population growth, the government of Ontario would have spent \$330 billion less over the last 15 years. That amount is almost exactly identical to the existing debt burden that we have today.

It is clear that we must now act to modernize government and make it more efficient so that we can create a more sustainable Ontario for today's generation and, importantly, future generations.

#### ANTI-RACISM ACTIVITIES

**Ms. Laura Mae Lindo:** My question is to the Minister of Community Safety. Yesterday, the Premier was asked to clearly and definitively repudiate the campaign of Faith Goldy. Unfortunately, the Premier refused to do so. We now have learned that Faith Goldy is robocalling voters across Toronto, claiming to be the Doug Ford candidate.

Does the Minister of Community Safety—the minister responsible for the Anti-Racism Directorate—believe that the Premier should 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. Michael A. Tibollo:** Thank you for the question. We've said it over and over again that there is no place for racism in the province of Ontario. I heard over and over again yesterday the Premier of the province repeat that, and I think he's abundantly clear in his position with respect to racism.

We are actively pursuing policies, and we have an individual who has been put in place to assist in terms of the Anti-Racism Directorate, our member from Brampton South.

I would encourage you and I encourage anyone else interested in pursuing those issues—really pursuing the issues, not to try to gain political advantage in a situation where it's not necessary—to work with us and find a solution that is good for the entire province. That's what we should be doing.

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** Supplementary?

**Ms. Laura Mae Lindo:** Wow. This is back to the minister: We have to do better. The people need the government to do better.

There is a candidate, Ms. Goldy, who represents unvarnished hateful, polarizing views about race and diversity, who has appeared in at least two photos with the Premier. The Premier won't denounce Faith Goldy specifically or apologize for taking these photos.

Will the minister responsible for anti-racism initiatives in this government denounce Ms. Goldy's campaign and apologize on behalf of the government for this seeming endorsement, whether it was an intentional endorsement or not?

**Hon. Michael A. Tibollo:** As I've stated previously, as the Premier has stated previously, there is no place for racism in this province. We've been very, very clear that this is an inclusive province, and we will work as government to ensure that those policies are continued and they're put into effect.

I invite the opposition to work with us to ensure that those policies are pursued and developed and put in place so that the government and the entire province is rid of racism. Thank you very much.

### GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY

**Mr. Stan Cho:** Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Finance. Throughout this week, we have heard more about the shocking truth of the state of Ontario's finances after 15 years of Liberal government. The minister's speech last Friday, the findings of the Financial Commission of Inquiry and the debate surrounding our government's motion to strike a Select Committee on Financial Transparency all point to a very clear message: We need action. We need to fix this. The public is depending on us.

Could the minister please explain why the Select Committee on Financial Transparency is so important in restoring accountability and trust in government?

**Hon. Victor Fedeli:** Thank you to the member for Willowdale for the question. The importance of the select committee cannot be understated. We are not just dealing with billions of dollars of wasteful spending. The Liberals were known for making promises that they couldn't afford to keep, that taxpayers couldn't afford to keep.

What we're really dealing with is a system of accounting schemes that kept this spending off the government's books. Rather than being up front with the people of Ontario about the real cost of their disastrous policy decisions, the previous Liberal government buried the debt so the public could not see its true extent.

That is why the select committee is so very important. The people of Ontario were not told the truth and they deserve answers.

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** Supplementary?

**Mr. Stan Cho:** Thank you, Minister. It's truly worrying to hear what the Liberals got away with for so long, but I am very relieved to hear that the Select Committee on Financial Transparency will get those answers.

Our government campaigned on a commitment to restore accountability and trust, and now we fully understand why it is so important for us to keep that promise. The public's confidence has been shaken. They deserve to know where and why their money has been wasted.

Could the minister please explain what steps the Select Committee on Financial Transparency will be able to take in order to ensure that accountability and trust can be restored?

**Hon. Victor Fedeli:** What the select committee will do is clear: They will find the answers. They will find out how the previous Liberal government made up its own accounting rules. They will find out how billions of dollars in deficits were buried in convoluted accounting schemes. They will find out how the Liberals ignored the warnings of the Auditor General, even after she called them out on their—and I'm quoting, Speaker—"bogus accounting."

Most importantly, the select committee will discover who ordered this massive scheme and will hold those responsible accountable. They will call witnesses, compel documents and gather evidence. Speaker, they will get answers because the people of Ontario deserve an explanation.

### ANTI-RACISM ACTIVITIES

**Ms. Marit Stiles:** My question is to the Minister of Education. So far this week, the Premier has been given five separate opportunities in this very House to denounce the neo-Nazi-supporting Toronto mayoral candidate Faith Goldy after appearing in a photo with her and her supporters. He has refused each and every opportunity to do so.

I ask the Minister of Education, since you're responsible for providing guidance to over 100,000 educators and setting the policies that impact over two million school-age children in this province, will you denounce Faith Goldy and her divisive campaign, or are you going to stick by the Premier in his refusal to do so?

**Hon. Lisa M. Thompson:** I'll tell the member opposite exactly what I denounce: I denounce political games.

While I'm standing here in this House, though, I am pleased to share with you that the Premier, time and time again, has spoken about the importance of getting our students on the path to success. That's why we're focusing on math scores. We're focusing on the EQAO to make sure that it's delivered and facilitated properly. That's why we're standing up and making sure that our students are prepared for the jobs of the 21st century.

**1100**

Our consultation will be inviting parents, families and people who want to exercise their voice across this province to have an opportunity to let us know what matters in terms of getting our students onto the path of success. Mr. Speaker, I can't wait for the consultations to start, and we look forward to speaking about it more in the future.

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** Supplementary.

**Ms. Marit Stiles:** There are many issues that the Minister of Education and I might disagree on. I thought perhaps not this one; surely, not this one. This should be pretty easy. The Minister of Education represents all of the students in our province. To not speak out against this kind of hate and show that kind of leadership is deeply disturbing.

If the Premier or the Minister of Education won't denounce Faith Goldy and her extreme racist views, surely she will denounce the man to the immediate left of the Premier in the same photo connected to the Goldy campaign

who, after the photo was taken, tweeted—and I quote, very unfortunately—“Muslims go to hell.”

Will the minister denounce Faith Goldy’s intolerant views and apologize—on behalf of the Premier, if she must—to Ontarians for the Premier’s appearance in a photo with a known neo-Nazi sympathizer?

**Hon. Lisa M. Thompson:** Again, I absolutely denounce political games just for the hope of getting attention.

The fact of the matter is, we are embarking on a consultation that is placing every individual in Ontario on an equal basis—every individual, every parent, every student, every teacher. Every single individual who wants to exercise their voice in an equal manner has an opportunity to participate in our consultation that’s coming up and to help create a path to success for our students in the 21st century.

Again, Speaker, as I said before, I can’t wait for this consultation to start. We are treating people on an equal basis and we will be facilitating it in a manner that it doesn’t matter where you are in Ontario, you have a chance to contribute. We’re going to have written submissions, we’re going to have online consultations and, again, telephone town halls—

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

## CURRICULUM

**Ms. Kathleen O. Wynne:** Mr. Speaker, my question actually follows up in terms of a question that is dealing with the issue of racism, and my question is for the Premier.

As we all know in this House and beyond, the history of Ontario and Canada has been told for generations without acknowledgement of or focus on the accurate relationship between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples.

The fastest-growing segment of youth population in Ontario is Indigenous youth. These are young people, many—if not all—of whom have been affected by the trauma of the residential school experience forced on their parents and grandparents. We owe it to them and to all non-Indigenous students to make sure that we tell the truth about our history so that another generation does not grow up in ignorance of the travesties of the past.

Given that the curriculum writing on social studies, history, geography, careers and civics that was under way was stopped as soon as this government took office, can the Premier assure the nearly two million students in Ontario that their history and social studies courses will reflect the truth about our history?

**Hon. Doug Ford:** Minister of Education.

**Hon. Lisa M. Thompson:** I’m pleased to stand today and address the issue. We are going to be doing everything we can to ensure, as I mentioned earlier in this House, that our students are on the best path to success in terms of the skills they need for the jobs of the 21st century. That includes science, that includes technology, that includes engineering and that includes mathematics. We heard loud

and clear during this last provincial campaign that parents are worried about their students with regard to math scores, so we’re respecting parents.

Again, we are encouraging every single member in this House to engage in the consultation that we will be kicking off, because there’s going to be an opportunity to exercise and validate what’s working in the classrooms and what’s not. That’s the important part right there: We have an opportunity to have everyone participate in a consultation so that we can get rid of what’s not working and make sure our—

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** Thank you very much. Supplementary.

**Ms. Kathleen O. Wynne:** I have to say that a consultation on smart boards is cold comfort to a generation of kids who need to understand the truth of the past so that they can create a different future.

Back to the Premier: On a related issue, it has been a practice annually for the Premier to meet with Indigenous leaders—chiefs of First Nations, the Métis Nation of Ontario leadership, the Ontario Federation of Indigenous Friendship Centres’ leadership, the Ontario Native Women’s Association—to meet with each group separately to talk about issues like education, like health care, like economic development, like self-government, in Indigenous communities and in our urban centres. These are critical meetings that help to set and advance an agenda and progress in those communities.

My question is: Have those meetings already taken place or have they been scheduled, and when will they take place?

**Hon. Lisa M. Thompson:** Back to the member opposite: I want to assure her that we are engaging in the right avenues. Just yesterday, Chief RoseAnne had an interview that aired with Steve Paikin. On air, she said that we are in conversation, we are taking steps forward and we’re working forward in the sense of identifying what needs to be addressed in our curriculum. There’s no better way to do it. Chief RoseAnne was on Steve Paikin yesterday, stating the fact that we are in conversation and we are going to be working together.

## ENERGY POLICIES

**Mr. Randy Pettapiece:** My question is to the Minister of Energy. We all know in this House that the Liberal government left us in an incredible mess. They left a \$15-billion deficit that was driven by a lack of respect for taxpayers’ dollars. Much of the debt was created through bad decisions and bad energy contracts.

Speaker, can the minister please explain why the Green Energy Act was the wrong decision for the province of Ontario?

**Hon. Greg Rickford:** I want to thank the member for Perth–Wellington for this question.

I like to generate my own talking points on these important matters, but I can’t beat this one. Here’s Rex Murphy again. He stated that the Green Energy Act “was a hydra-headed monster of regulations and fiat that

bludgeoned Ontario's rural communities, stripped Ontario's municipalities of every right to the slightest participation in their own planning, placed a darkling pall over the manufacturing industry, and imposed the highest electricity costs in all North America on some of Ontario's lowest-income citizens."

The Green Energy Act, the 750 green energy projects—that helps explain. It takes us a long way down the road why we're in a \$15-billion sinkhole. We're going to stand up for families, for small businesses and large employers, cut hydro rates and make life more affordable for this province.

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** Supplementary.

**Mr. Randy Pettapiece:** Here's a Minister of Energy who is showing great leadership on this important file. Lowering hydro costs for the people is one of our government's most important promises. I am proud that our government is taking steps towards this goal.

Mr. Speaker, can the minister tell the members of this House why repealing the Green Energy Act is good for the people of Ontario and good for the economy of Ontario?

**Hon. Greg Rickford:** Repealing the Green Energy Act is just one important step in a series that we've made in an effort to cut hydro bills by 12%, driving efficiencies within Ontario's energy sector, sending a strong message that families, small businesses and large employers have some relief in paying their bills so that we can hire more people, so that families don't make choices between heating and eating or if they can enrol their children in a sports program.

This caused families to struggle. It is, without question, one of the biggest transfers of wealth in the history of this province. That act needed to be repealed. We're repealing that act. That's a promise made, colleagues, and that's a promise kept.

## INJURED WORKERS

**Mr. Wayne Gates:** My question is to the Minister of Labour. The announcement this morning of a 30% reduction in employer workers' safety and insurance premiums due to the elimination of the unfunded liability is a kick in the teeth for workers of this province. This dramatic cut for injured workers is dragging Ontario backwards, not moving them forward.

1110

Will the minister of employers—I mean, labour—explain to injured workers if they should be bracing for cuts or clawbacks of their benefits?

**Hon. Laurie Scott:** Thank you to the member opposite for the question.

Through you, Mr. Speaker, today's announcement that WSIB has eliminated its unfunded liability means workers can be confident that benefits will be there in the future. This is good news for the province of Ontario.

Today's rate reduction of nearly 30% for businesses across the province is a \$1.45-billion injection into the economy. This is just one more example that Ontario is

finally open for business. We can create good jobs for the people of Ontario.

Mr. Speaker, this has been a good-news announcement today, not only for businesses but for injured workers.

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** Supplementary.

**Mr. Wayne Gates:** Mr. Speaker, back to the minister: The unfunded liability was actually funded on the backs of injured workers. Under 15 years of a Liberal government, injured workers' claims were increasingly denied, putting money back into the pockets of their bosses—not for workers.

These injured workers face barriers to having their claims accepted, resulting in billions in savings already for big employers.

Will this minister direct WSIB to undertake a massive reversal of how it assesses claims now that the unfunded liability is, with a sleight of hand, poof, magically gone? Or is this about making the Premier's big business friends happy, not workers?

**Hon. Laurie Scott:** Mr. Speaker, through you to the member: Businesses did participate in bringing down the unfunded liability. They had increased premiums. The best thing that we could do was to get the unfunded liability gone, and we did. That helps injured workers, because if the unthinkable happens and an injury occurs at work, they need to be secure that there are services there for them. So this helps the future security of injured workers, but it also acknowledges that businesses have contributed greatly, and they have an average 30% rate reduction.

I don't really know why the member opposite is upset. This is a good-news story for the province of Ontario. It's not only open for business, but it's protecting injured workers.

## ENERGY POLICIES

**Mr. Sam Oosterhoff:** My question is for the Minister of Energy, Northern Development and Mines.

Mr. Speaker, in my beautiful riding of Niagara West, numerous wind turbines scar the landscape. It angers the members of my community because they know that these turbines produce energy we simply don't need. So I was excited when, last week, our government announced the repeal of the 2009 Green Energy Act.

I'm proud to be part of a government—

*Applause.*

**Mr. Sam Oosterhoff:** Yes, that is worth clapping for.

I'm proud to be part of a government that is taking real action to stop wasteful policy decisions.

Can the minister please explain how repealing the Green Energy Act will protect my constituents in Niagara West from more needless energy projects?

**Hon. Greg Rickford:** Once again, I want to thank the member from Niagara West for his question, and many of our caucus members who heard the same thing all over this province.

We wonder sometimes what would have happened if industrial wind turbines had been planned or proposed for the Danforth. Instead, they were put out to municipalities

in other regions of the province. They cost us a lot of money. They were projects we didn't need and projects that we didn't want.

The Green Energy Act took power away from the municipalities and gave it firmly to the Liberal government of that time. Their ideological crusade forced projects into communities who didn't want them. They ignored these people and their communities.

The energy sector, special interest groups and friends of the Liberals got rich from these bad contracts, and families got poor because of high bills. That's why we're repealing this act, Mr. Speaker. Promise made—

**Interjections:** Promise kept.

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** Supplementary.

**Mr. Sam Oosterhoff:** Thank you, Minister Rickford, for helping our government put the people of Ontario first.

Mr. Speaker, our promise to give power back to the people of Ontario is one of the key reasons our government was elected on June 7. We also promised Ontarians that we would make responsible policy decisions that will make a real difference in the lives of people. Repealing the Green Energy Act signals the end of irresponsible policy decisions over the past 15 years. Could the minister please tell the members of this House why repealing the Green Energy Act is a step towards better energy policy in Ontario?

**Hon. Greg Rickford:** In the time leading up to June 7, we heard loud and clear that the people of Ontario had no appetite for projects that they didn't want or need, high taxes, big government, the largest carbon tax in the world. They got election indigestion when the opposition suggested perpetuating the Liberals' tax-and-spend buffet. The bill turned out to be \$5 billion more than it was intended; now we know it was \$15 billion. Quickly, the opposition became the "non-digestible party."

People of Ontario wanted the government to slim down, cut the fat. They placed their order with this government. They asked for a fair slice of our plan for prosperity, and that's exactly what we're delivering.

#### CHILD CARE

**Ms. Doly Begum:** My question is to the Minister of Education. Speaker, parents across Ontario need affordable, high-quality, public, not-for-profit child care. Public dollars should go into care for our kids, not private profit for multinational companies. But the Premier seems more interested in helping corporate child care shareholders than parents or children.

I want to share a message from a resident of Ontario with the minister. Lynn is a grandmother from Kenora. She said, "We need more reliable and affordable community child care in Kenora, not money going to foreign-owned corporations."

What does the minister have to say to grandmas like Lynn?

**Hon. Lisa M. Thompson:** What I'd like to share with people from all over Ontario is that we're looking to respect parents. Parents deserve to have choice. Parents

deserve to have daycare, early-on years, in their own backyard. That's what this government has pledged to do. We had a mandate to respect parents in this past election. Being elected with an overwhelming majority, we have heard the people loud and clear from this province.

Again, I don't know what this party opposite has against choice and against expansion and easy access to daycare. That's what this government is standing up for and that's what we're going to be fulfilling. It's going to be a promise made, and it's going to be a—

**Interjections:** Promise kept.

**Hon. Lisa M. Thompson:** Promise kept. Exactly.

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** Supplementary.

**Ms. Doly Begum:** You know, I really wish the minister would get out of her talking points and say something real.

Last week, the minister tried to pit parents against each other, suggesting anyone concerned about the privatization of child care just needed to get "out of the bubble of Toronto." Maybe the minister should get out of the bubble of Toronto.

Laurie is a parent in Thunder Bay who said, "Non-profit child care provides support and education for lots of families in our area and we need more of it." She also said, "Giving money to big corporations isn't going to help parents in Thunder Bay," while educators in Peterborough, for example, worry that rural areas will simply be left without child care if the Premier turns child care over to the private sector.

Can the minister explain to parents in rural communities, in big cities and everywhere in between why she thinks giving money to big corporations is more important than safe, high-quality, not-for-profit child care?

**Hon. Lisa M. Thompson:** To the member opposite, I drive in and out of a bubble every week, twice a week. With that said, I am very well connected not only within urban centres across this province but throughout rural Ontario as well, and I can tell you that parents that do not have cars and do not have a way to go 20 kilometres out of their way to turn around and get back to work 20 kilometres in the opposite direction need choice.

**1120**

Our government is standing up to expand the spaces that the member opposite has questioned. What's wrong with expanding spaces? What's wrong with choice? What's wrong with respecting parents? I'm telling you, this New Democratic propaganda really has to stop because they're losing credibility, day in and day out, with this type of questioning. Again, our government is standing up—

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

#### CLIMATE CHANGE

**Mr. Sheref Sabawy:** My question is to the Minister of the Environment, Conservation and Parks. The effects of climate change are undeniable and costly. That's why this government stands firm to lead with a climate change plan. Ontarians know that this side of the House is committed to

developing a made-in-Ontario plan, one that does not include a regressive program like the cap-and-trade carbon tax that made life harder for everyday Ontarians.

Mr. Speaker, when we were elected, it was with a mandate from the people of Ontario, a mandate to get rid of the cap-and-trade program. With that, we are fulfilling our mandate while leading with an effective strategy to fight climate change. Can the minister update us on the government's plan to combat climate change?

**Hon. Rod Phillips:** Thank you to the member from Mississauga—Erin Mills. Mr. Speaker, through you to the member: A serious, man-made global problem, climate change is something that presents significant challenges to our air, to our land, to our water, to locally grown food, to our infrastructure. Ontario has an important role to play in fighting climate change, but we also know that families are stretched thin and can't afford to pay more for expensive programs that don't deliver results.

That's why we're committed to delivering a made-in-Ontario solution—a solution that protects our environment responsibly but also protects our economy so that it can create the opportunities we want for all of our citizens. Mr. Speaker, that plan will strike the right balance between a healthy economy and a healthy environment.

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** Supplementary?

**Mr. Sheref Sabawy:** I thank the minister for his response. Still to him: As the engine driving the Canadian economy, Ontario has an important role in fighting climate change and mitigating the threat it represents to our prosperity and way of life. We have made significant progress. It was actually a Progressive Conservative government that initially took action with the environment, and now this government is creating a strategy that encompasses the environmental and economic impacts associated with climate change and our collective need to take action.

Today, Ontario is in the enviable position of having one of the most effective electricity grid systems and best natural gas conservation programs in North America. However, that progress cannot come at the expense of families' prosperity and overburdened taxpayers. Can the minister explain how he plans to balance the needs of Ontario families with that of the government?

**Hon. Rod Phillips:** Mr. Speaker, through you to the member: The member is correct. We do have one of the greenest electricity grids. This is as a result of the concerted efforts of individuals and communities across this province. Greenhouse gas emissions have dropped by 22% since 2005. I point out that Canada has seen its emissions rise 3% overall.

While Canada's emissions have declined by just 1.5% since 2000, Ontario's emissions have dropped by 20%. In fact, Ontario is well on its way to meeting the Paris 2020 targets for Ontario that relate to Ontario's share. So, Mr. Speaker, Ontario has done a lot. But we will continue to do more.

Climate change calls on us to do two things. It calls on us to build resilience against the effects of climate change, the effects we are seeing today and tomorrow. It also calls

on us to curb greenhouse gases. Our plan will do both of those things. We can protect the environment and protect the economy.

## CHILD PROTECTION

**Miss Monique Taylor:** My question is to the Acting Premier. Yesterday, the coroner released the report of the expert panel on the deaths of 12 children and youth in residential placements. All were in the care of a children's aid society or an Indigenous child well-being society. Eight of those 12 young people were Indigenous. All 12 struggled with mental health challenges. Despite their complexity and high risk, the panel found that intervention was minimal. They were let down in so many ways.

The time for talk is over. Action is necessary now. What specific resources will your minister provide to ensure children in care are put first and get the support that they and their families need?

**Hon. Christine Elliott:** I thank the member very much for the question. The deaths of these children are indeed a tragedy. Children and youth in the care of children's aid societies are among the most vulnerable people in our province. We need to take special care to make sure that they are protected.

The Minister of Children, Community and Social Services and the Office of the Chief Coroner have a joint directive that is followed by services when a child dies who was receiving services from a society at the time of death, or who had received services in the previous 12 months. I know that the minister and the Office of the Chief Coroner follow that mandated process to help understand what happened and to identify opportunities where further deaths may be prevented.

We want to make sure that we work with service providers to make sure that all serious occurrences are reported, first of all, in a timely manner, and that corrective actions are taken as appropriate.

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** Supplementary.

**Miss Monique Taylor:** Sadly, we've heard many of the report's findings before. The panel was struck by the lack of focus on family preservation and early intervention. Young people had minimal opportunity to have a voice in their own care. Many were placed far away from their home communities—a lack of inspection of residential facilities and inadequate training of staff.

Speaker, the Provincial Advocate for Children and Youth has called on this government to deliver an action plan within 100 days that will fundamentally change the way in which the province protects children and supports families. Will the Deputy Premier make that commitment today?

**Hon. Christine Elliott:** While the minister and the Chief Coroner are following the mandated process that they need to follow, based on the directive, it is certainly something that both the minister, the Minister of Indigenous Affairs and I, as Minister of Health, are taking a look at. We know that there is action that needs to be taken. We want to make sure that these children are protected, and so

I can tell you that this is taken very seriously by our government.

We are going to be looking at the circumstances, as you have mentioned them. There are a number of circumstances that—you're quite right—are issues that we need to take a look at. We will be doing that because we want to make sure that all children in the care of children's aid societies are protected, but certainly in this case, the Indigenous youth need to be particularly protected because of the other issues that you have mentioned. I thank you for the question.

#### ASSISTANCE TO FARMERS

**Ms. Jill Dunlop:** My question is for the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs. Farmers from my riding are struggling as they experience unpredictable losses in livestock due to predator damage. They are looking for assistance and fair compensation for losses outside of their control.

The Ontario Wildlife Damage Compensation Program is designed specifically to assist livestock farmers with economic losses due to conflicts with wildlife. However, farmers are feeling frustrated with the current Ontario Wildlife Damage Compensation Program due to changes made by the previous government. The previous Liberal government made it more difficult for farmers to submit legitimate claims to assist them with unnecessary regulations and pricing that did not reflect market value.

Mr. Speaker, what is the minister going to do to reduce regulatory burdens and red tape for livestock farmers and demonstrate that Ontario is open for business again?

**Hon. Ernie Hardeman:** I thank the member for the great question. Our government for the people is taking immediate action to ensure that the Ontario Wildlife Damage Compensation Program works as it was intended: to support farmers who experience losses due to predator damage.

1130

I heard concerns from our farmers and stakeholders regarding red tape and regulatory burdens surrounding the current program, and we have taken action on this. This is why, effective September 4, 2018, we have made two changes to the program:

(1) The farm business registration number requirement has been updated to allow applicants to apply to the program using a valid registration number that is a current number, or the number from the previous year if they don't have a current registration number.

(2) The standardized pricing method has been updated to include separate pricing for steers and heifers.

These two updates both provide clarity on pricing and reduce red tape and regulatory burdens on legitimate claims for compensation losses due to previous technicalities and unnecessary paperwork.

This government listened to the people and is committed to making—

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

**Ms. Jill Dunlop:** Thank you, Minister, for standing up for farmers in Simcoe North and across Ontario.

Back to the minister: It is great to hear that the minister has taken immediate action towards helping livestock farmers with the two most recent changes to the Ontario Wildlife Damage Compensation Program. I know farmers across Ontario will be pleased to hear that the government is listening to and working for them.

Mr. Speaker, through you to the minister: How is the minister going to continue to engage stakeholders and the agriculture industry on improving the program in the future?

**Hon. Ernie Hardeman:** Thank you again, Mr. Speaker, and to the member. This is only the first step of many to ensure our programs work for the people and for our farmers. We are committed to addressing the concerns of our farmers and stakeholders so that programs continue to work as they are intended, or to make effective changes to ensure they work in the future going forward.

We will continue to seek input from our stakeholders on:

—introducing more ways to prove predator damage has occurred;

—ensuring municipal investigators are properly trained to address the predation;

—creating a separate appeals process that restores farmers' confidence in the independence and transparency of the process; and

—refining more areas of the standardized pricing model to better reflect market prices.

I look forward to working with our organizations and shareholders to introduce more effective changes in the months to come.

Ontario is open for business, and I look forward to making life more affordable for our farmers so they can continue to provide the best quality food—

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

#### HORSE RACING INDUSTRY

**Mr. Percy Hatfield:** I think we're on the Uncle Ernie hit parade today, because my question is also to the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs. Good morning, Minister.

Speaker, Ontario's horse racing community is struggling. The Slots at Racetracks Program provided good jobs, as well as a heck of a lot of revenue for the taxpayers of Ontario. The Premier and some of his ministers promised during the summer election to get our tracks healthy again.

Speaker, will the minister give us a time frame today of when the government will live up to its election promises and reinstate the Slots at Racetracks Program?

**Hon. Ernie Hardeman:** I refer the question to the Minister of Finance.

**Hon. Victor Fedeli:** Sorry, you don't get the Minister of Agriculture today. You're stuck with me, member.

What we do know is that for 15 years the industry was neglected by the previous Liberal government and

propped up by the NDP. Our government is committed to working with industry stakeholders and OLG to explore solutions for the issue you brought up.

Our government understands the importance of the horse racing industry all across Ontario. We support this important industry, which creates jobs that stimulate local economies. We look forward to working with representatives of the horse racing industry.

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** Supplementary?

**Mr. Percy Hatfield:** Speaker, 30,000 jobs were lost when the Liberals killed the Slots at Racetracks Program. My track in Windsor went out of business and was torn down. We lost more than 2,000 good-paying jobs in my area. The summer track in Leamington needs more race dates and an off-track betting facility. Other tracks, such as Fort Erie, are struggling to survive.

Promises have been made, Speaker. If this government is indeed for the people and open for business, when will horse people at our smaller tracks get what is owed to them?

**Hon. Victor Fedeli:** Thank you for the supplementary. Let's all remember the devastation to the horse racing industry that you're speaking about. It was the official opposition who helped pass the previous government's 2012 budget with policies aimed at killing the horse racing industry in Ontario, so there's a mirror that you should be looking in for that.

I'm proud to say, first of all, that members on this side of this House voted against that and actually stood up for the horse racing industry. Our government understands the importance of the horse racing industry, particularly in rural communities.

I look forward to continuing to meet with representatives of the horse racing industry, the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs and with OLG to help the horse racing sector grow and prosper in Ontario.

#### NOTICE OF DISSATISFACTION

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** Pursuant to standing order 38(a), the member for Kitchener Centre has given notice of her dissatisfaction with the answer to her question given by the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services concerning denouncing Faith Goldy. This matter will be debated today at 6 p.m.

**Mr. Bill Walker:** Point of order.

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** Point of order: the member for Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound.

**Mr. Bill Walker:** I'd just like to remind everyone in the House that there's a photo on the staircase today at 12 noon for Rowan's Law.

#### VISITOR

**Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens:** Point of order.

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** Another point of order: the member for St. Catharines.

**Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens:** I would like to welcome a constituent from my riding today: Willy Noiles. Willy is the president of the Ontario Network of Injured

Workers and has been a long-time activist fighting for working people in St. Catharines. Welcome to the Legislature, Willy.

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** There being no deferred votes, this House stands in recess until 2 p.m. this afternoon.

*The House recessed from 1137 to 1400.*

#### INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** As members are aware, the Legislative Assembly of Ontario has a long tradition of interparliamentary relations with other jurisdictions around the world.

Today in the Speaker's gallery, it's my pleasure to introduce a delegation of American legislators and officials representing the Council of State Governments, a forum that fosters the development of interparliamentary co-operation and provides participants with the opportunity to network with colleagues to share ideas on issues of common concern.

Please join me in warmly welcoming our guests to the Ontario Legislature.

*Applause.*

**Mr. Mike Schreiner:** I would like to welcome to Queen's Park a lawyer I've worked with for many years on many issues, David Donnelly, as well as two of his articling students, Alexandra Whyte and Sara Gray, to Queen's Park.

#### MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

##### ANTI-RACISM ACTIVITIES

**Ms. Jill Andrew:** Good afternoon, Mr. Speaker. Yesterday, I had a late show encouraging government to state clearly that they do not support Faith Goldy. They refused. Instead, the Ford government provided a canned speech denouncing hate, with just enough of the MPP from King-Vaughan's familial immigrant story to deflect from the topic at hand.

Today, we asked the Minister of Education and the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services, two who are directly responsible for our most vulnerable Ontarians, to denounce Faith Goldy by name. They didn't.

Very recently, however, our Premier has mentioned her name in a sentence. I personally say thank you. That is a good step. Now it's time for the government to go a step further and state that they do not support her using our Premier's name or likeness in any of her campaign communications. My residents, like Lyba Spring, Jeff Farrell and others, are receiving Faith's robocalls which mention our Premier's name.

Faith Goldy believes in bringing back TAVIS, carding and the school resource program. We need our Minister of Education and our Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services to stop these sorts of actions before

they even begin. It's bad enough that the Minister of Labour's senior policy adviser is allegedly married to Faith Goldy's sister, who is a key player on her political campaign.

On behalf of the people in my riding, I say: Let's disassociate our Premier completely from Faith Goldy.

#### CANADIAN POLICE MEMORIAL RIDE TO REMEMBER

**Mr. Prabmeet Singh Sarkaria:** I would like to take this opportunity today to talk about a great event that happens every year in Ontario. Today at 8 a.m. the 18th Canadian police and peace officers' memorial ride began from the police college. Over the last 17 years, police and peace officers from around Ontario have participated in a 750-kilometre bike ride in honour of police and peace officers who have made the ultimate sacrifice.

Under the leadership of members of the Niagara regional police and with the support of the Ontario Provincial Police, Peel Regional Police, Ottawa Police Service, Toronto Police Service, Royal Canadian Mounted Police, Durham regional police, Hamilton Police Service, Kingston Police service, Waterloo Regional Police and York Regional Police, the Canadian Police Memorial Ride to Remember has grown to include 170 police and peace officer cyclists from 15 different law enforcement agencies.

This ride is also important because it gives us a unique opportunity of community engagement with the public and enhances the legitimacy of policing with the public.

Recently, the Attorney General also had a great opportunity to show her support for this at a recent barbecue held by York Regional Police.

Thanks to the generous support of Canadian Tire, Motorola Solutions and Bulk Barn Foods Ltd., over \$25,000 will be donated to support the Canadian Police and Peace Officer's Memorial fund.

#### HOTEL DIEU SHAVER HEALTH AND REHABILITATION CENTRE

**Mr. Jeff Burch:** I recently met with staff from the Hotel Dieu Shaver, a health and rehabilitation centre in my riding. Since 2007, they've been fighting for a planning grant to expand the facility with 65 additional beds. The Shaver works collaboratively with the Niagara Health System to optimize patient flow in order to alleviate pressure on the system, keeping patients out of long-term care. Rehabilitation services optimize a patient's ability to live independently at home and reduce the length of stays in our hospitals.

Mr. Speaker, my father was a victim of hallway medicine. After suffering from a stroke, he was transferred to the wrong hospital and experienced inadequate care. His condition only began to improve once he was admitted to the Shaver. My father's case is not an outlier; this is the experience of countless people across Niagara. The Shaver is the only rehab hospital in the region, despite having the

third-largest aging population in Canada, and we must be prepared to meet their needs.

The Shaver was successful when the province announced a \$500,000 planning grant this past May. They have been in the dark on the status of this grant since the new government took office and need to know whether or not they can expect the money so they can begin planning for years to come.

Expanding investment into rehabilitation centres like the Shaver provides a multi-faceted policy solution that fits into the government's stated goals and objectives. I would urge the government to review this file and complete the final steps in ensuring health care and patient needs are prioritized in Niagara by following through and providing this much-needed grant.

#### INTERNATIONAL PLOWING MATCH

**Mr. Rick Nicholls:** I'm pleased to rise in the House today to commend all the members in the Legislature who took the time to attend the 2018 International Plowing Match in Pain Court. The IPM is the largest outdoor event of its kind in North America. Hundreds of acres of fertile farmers' fields are transformed into a tented city with temporary streets, entertainment stages, a rodeo, the competitive plowing fields and many other features.

It was also great to see so many farmers, organizations and volunteers participating from my riding of Chatham-Kent-Leamington. This event would not have been possible without the time and commitment of all those involved in making the 2018 International Plowing Match the success that it was.

The competition for the Ontario Queen of the Furrow is one of the key events of the IPM every year.

On behalf of our government caucus, I would like to take the opportunity to congratulate the 2018-19 Ontario Queen of the Furrow, Derika Nauta from Tavistock, Ontario. I know our Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs, the Honourable Ernie Hardeman, is proud to have the Queen of the Furrow from Tavistock, in Oxford county. We are confident that she will represent Oxford and Ontario well.

Also, thank you to Kailey Donaldson from Walton, Ontario, for serving as the 2017-18 Queen of the Furrow, having represented Halton region.

Each year, contestants participate in many activities and events that ultimately decide the winner. Judging has previously been based on their performance in areas such as plowing ability, appearance and deportment, an interview, a speech and an impromptu speech.

I know there are many more things I could say, but we are looking forward to seeing Derika Nauta at rural events, expos and banquets across the province throughout this year.

#### CURRICULUM

**Ms. Catherine Fife:** Last Thursday afternoon, students at Waterloo Collegiate Institute walked out of class to

protest the PC government's cancellation of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission curriculum-writing sessions and their move to revert back to the 1998 health and physical education curriculum. Protest is an important part of the democratic process, and I was proud to see youth in my region standing in solidarity with the estimated 40,000 students who spoke out against the government actions they disagree with.

**1410**

Students from WCI made their own signs that said, "You are hurting our futures," "Move forwards, not backwards," and "We the students do not consent." Students also signed petitions calling on the government to keep the 2015 K-to-8 curriculum in place.

I had the opportunity to meet the organizers, Garima, Teddy and Mairah, the day after the protest. One of the organizers told me that they suffered while being taught a curriculum that didn't include content on mental health, consent and LGBTQ+ issues. Because she wasn't taught this, she didn't know that what she was experiencing was so common. They told me that they are advocating for the students of the future; they want better for them. They are eloquent, intelligent and thoughtful young people who care about equity, education and progress.

These students are showing us the way forward, and it's clear that with young people like them our province's future is bright and inclusive.

What this government needs to understand is that you are wrong and the students are right.

#### SAULT AREA HOSPITAL

**Mr. Ross Romano:** Good, reliable medical care should be accessible to everyone. It's not something that should only be available to people within driving distance of the GTA or the Ottawa area.

Many residents in my hometown of Sault Ste. Marie and across northern Ontario often have to travel great distances in order to get access to the care they need, and a lot of the time doing so at their own expense.

I'm very happy to report today, Mr. Speaker, that Sault Area Hospital has received a combined \$4.5 million in local donations alone over the past few weeks to help fund an expansion of our cardiac care unit. This will allow Saultites and those in surrounding areas to get access to the care they need without having to travel great lengths in order to receive it.

I really want to recognize Dale Harrison. Dale Harrison is a person who was born and raised in Sault Ste. Marie, but he left the Soo to do great things in a personal business career and, although he does not live in the city, donated \$3 million to the Sault Area Hospital for this.

The Dr. Lou and Mae Lukenda Charitable Foundation—Dr. Lou was such a historic figure and did so much in Sault Ste. Marie—donated \$1 million, and our local board, staff and volunteers at the Sault Area Hospital Foundation have donated another \$500,000 in order to make this a reality.

I want to thank these individuals and their groups for all the work they have done to help bring quality access to health care to Sault Ste. Marie.

#### EMERGENCY SERVICES

**M<sup>me</sup> France Gélinas:** We all know that if something goes wrong—you have an accident, you come upon somebody who is sick or hurt, or your house is on fire—what do you do? You dial 911. Then, 911 answers and says, "Fire, police or ambulance?" and they dispatch whatever is needed. Although we teach all of our kids in school that if you need help you dial 911, this is not true for most of the people I represent. For us, if you want the police, you dial 888-310-1122; if you want an ambulance, you dial 877-351-2345—unless you live south of the watershed. Then, you dial 705-673-1117; if you want fire, you dial 705-235-1306.

The programs are there. The ambulance will come, the police will come, but not through 911. It is time to change this.

Everybody expects that if you dial 911, you're not going to get, "This number is not in service." But if you come to my riding, this is what you will get. We had tons of tourists—we had a beautiful summer in Nickel Belt and in most of the northeast—and many of them discovered that to their horror, like Stan and Helena Snider. Stan had a heart attack on July 5. He dialed 911, just to be told that 911 was not in service.

This has to change. Everybody needs access to 911 services no matter where you are in Ontario.

#### HOME CARE

**Mr. Kaleed Rasheed:** Mr. Speaker, my statement is in regard to how our constituency offices and our institutions can collaborate with each other to provide better service to our residents.

Mississauga East–Cooksville is a very mature and established community where many seniors live. Home care services are provided to support independent living and are a fiscally responsible way in delivering health care services.

A constituent of mine, Beata, is a full-time working daughter who has an elderly father living at home. Her father is mentally alert but physically incapable of reaching the washroom in time. He is receiving home care three times a day. But the standard of care was not up to the mark, so Beata one day reached out to my office.

Beata is one of the lucky ones, having a very flexible boss who allows her to go home and fill in the gaps in her father's care. But there is only so much a person can do. She is working full-time, taking care of her father full-time after work and doing the work that the home care providers were supposed to do. Becoming desperate, she started knocking on doors. Nothing was being done until she came to my office. We were able to facilitate a meeting with the LHIN, addressing the key issues head-on. What

resulted, Mr. Speaker? The LHIN changed the health care provider. Beata is now extremely happy.

Once again, I just want to show how constituency offices and these institutions can collaborate and provide better services to our residents.

#### RONALD DANCEY

**Mrs. Belinda Karahalios:** A dear friend of mine, a friend of my husband's as well, and also my campaign chair, Ronald Leslie Dancey, also known as Ron, passed away on August 31 at the Grand River Hospital with his wife, Carolyn, and daughter, Janet, at his side, after a lengthy battle with myelodysplastic syndrome.

Ron was born September 25, 1936, in Toronto and raised in Pickering Beach, Ontario. His early career was in the automotive field. He was a licensed mechanic, and for so many years he owned and operated Dancey-Calder Motors Ltd. and Canco Collision Centres in Toronto and Markham. He also owned and operated a local newspaper, the Markham-Unionville Times. He served as ward councillor, regional councillor and deputy mayor of Markham, Ontario, from 1978 to 1985. He moved to Cambridge in 1985, where he owned and operated Morrison Meat Packers. He retired in 2001.

Ron Dancey was a long-standing member of the federal CPC and provincial PC Party. He was a current VP of both the federal and provincial riding associations. He served as president for the federal Cambridge CPC EDA multiple times and also provincially as well.

As mentioned, he was my campaign chair and Gary Goodyear's campaign manager in the last federal election. He was the backbone of Cambridge Conservative politics. His involvement goes back to helping to plan the original meeting between the PC Party of Canada and the Alliance that occurred in Cambridge to discuss merging.

Ron, you will be missed. May you rest in peace.

#### VISITOR

**Mr. Roman Baber:** If I may, on a point of order, Speaker?

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** Point of order?

**Mr. Roman Baber:** I'd like to welcome back to the House a friend, former PC candidate and a distinguished lawyer in the city of Toronto: Mr. Todd McCarthy.

### INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

#### HUMAN RIGHTS CODE AMENDMENT ACT, 2018

#### LOI DE 2018 MODIFIANT LE CODE DES DROITS DE LA PERSONNE

Madame Des Rosiers moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 35, An Act to amend the Human Rights Code with respect to immigration status, genetic characteristics, police records and social conditions / *Projet de loi 35, Loi modifiant le Code des droits de la personne en ce qui concerne le statut d'immigrant, les caractéristiques génétiques, l'existence de dossiers de police et la situation sociale.*

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

*First reading agreed to.*

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** Would the member for Ottawa-Vanier like to give a brief explanation of her bill?

1420

**M<sup>me</sup> Nathalie Des Rosiers:** The bill amends the Human Rights Code to include additional grounds of discrimination: genetic characteristics, police records, social condition and immigration status. It's designed to modernize the Human Rights Code so that it responds to current conditions of our society.

### STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

#### CONCUSSIONS

**Hon. Sylvia Jones:** Today we honour the memory of a young woman, who loved to play rugby, named Rowan.

Before I begin, I'd like to acknowledge the presence in the gallery of Rowan's father, Gordon Stringer.

Speaker, allow me to share Rowan's story.

Rowan was a 17-year-old Ottawa varsity rugby player who died from sustaining multiple concussions in May 2013. She was playing the game she loved. Not only was she captain of her high school rugby team; she played club rugby in Barrhaven during the summer break.

On that Wednesday in May, Rowan was tackled hard. She flew through the air, landing on her head and neck. She was awake and able to sit up briefly, but then slipped into unconsciousness. She never woke up.

A coroner's inquest held in 2015 concluded that Rowan's death was a result of more than one blow to her head. She had in fact been hit twice in a game a week prior to her final game, and likely suffered concussions each time.

Rowan suspected she had a concussion and knew something wasn't right but, like many athletes, didn't fully understand the dangers, and played on.

As part of the 2015 inquest, the coroner issued 49 recommendations to prevent future tragedies like the one that took Rowan's life. In 2016, the Rowan's Law Advisory Committee Act, 2016, was passed with all-party support.

Chaired by Dr. Dan Cass, the committee delivered a report that contained 21 recommendations. One of the key recommendations coming out of the committee's report was legislation, to be called Rowan's Law, which would govern all organized amateur sport—school-based and

non-school-based—in Ontario. With unanimous, all-party support, Rowan's Law was passed on March 7, 2018.

I want to take a moment to recognize the efforts of everyone who came together to bring this important bill into law.

In particular, I want to acknowledge Gordon and Kathleen Stringer, Rowan's parents. Gordon and Kathleen's tireless and tenacious work, dedicated to the memory of their beloved daughter, has been the force guiding our efforts.

We are also joined today by some of the members of the Rowan's Law Advisory Committee, and with your indulgence, I would like to introduce them: Chris Markham, Warren Hoshizaki, Kent Bassett-Spiers and Elisabeth White.

We are joined by other partners, including Silvana Farrace-Perry, Mercedes Watson, Steve Moore, Sharon Moore, Pamela Fuselli and Swapna Mylabathula.

Thank you all for joining us today.

Today, and annually, the last Wednesday in September will be proclaimed as Rowan's Law Day. This day will help raise awareness about concussions so that players feel empowered to tell someone in authority when they or a teammate might have a concussion.

Today, on the inaugural Rowan's Law Day, I'm proud to say that Ontario's government for the people will take the next step in honouring Rowan's legacy.

Reducing the risk of concussions is always the goal. But concussions happen, and knowing what to do—whether you're an athlete, a parent, a coach or a teacher—can save lives. We will honour Rowan Stringer's memory by launching a province-wide multimedia campaign to raise awareness about concussion safety. This campaign will get information about concussions directly in front of the Ontarians who need it most.

Our government for the people pledges to work with athletes, parents, coaches, educators and sports organizers in raising awareness for concussion safety. I will be working with my colleagues from across government, including the Ministers of Education, Health and Long-Term Care, Training, Colleges and Universities, Municipal Affairs and Housing, and Children, Community and Social Services.

I know today is an especially meaningful day for my colleague the Minister of Children, Community and Social Services, the Honourable Lisa MacLeod, who introduced the Rowan's Law Advisory Committee Act as a private member's bill in 2015. We are very proud that Ontario is the first jurisdiction in Canada to pass concussion legislation.

I know that I can count on everyone in this House to continue raising awareness about concussion safety. Many of you have already signalled your support today by wearing purple, Rowan's favourite colour. You have in your offices materials that will help you commemorate Rowan's Law Day and promote concussion safety.

Key among the materials that my office shared is the Rowan's Law Day tool kit for schools that was developed by the Ontario Physical and Health Education Association. The tool kit contains posters, resources and information

that educators and others can use to help students and athletes learn about concussions. The tool kit is an excellent example of how our partners are working together to educate and increase awareness about concussions.

We must continue to work together to honour Rowan's legacy. I know we will all join together to remember Rowan Stringer in the best way possible, by making it safe for everyone to play the sport they love.

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** Responses?

**Ms. Catherine Fife:** It's a pleasure to rise today and speak during Ontario's first Rowan's Law Day. We've come a long way in Ontario and in this Legislature since we first began talking about Rowan Stringer's tragic passing and the establishment of the Rowan's Law Advisory Committee.

Today we are celebrating her day, which was created as part of legislation that will hopefully go a long way towards improving concussion education and shift the culture of sports. We are beginning to see that culture shift happen today. Professional athletes are donating their brains for research. Sports organizations are starting to take concussions seriously for the first time. As parents or players, we are working towards making sure everyone stays safe when they play sports.

Each time I've spoken about Rowan's Law in the House, I've highlighted the stories of those who have suffered concussions and were brave enough to talk about their stories. Today I want to talk about Ben Fanelli, a former Kitchener Ranger. As a rookie 16-year-old defenceman, he got hit behind the net, his helmet came off and his head hit the metal stanchion. When he woke up in the hospital, his doctor said, "Sports are out of the question. You won't be able to go to school for two years, and you may never be the same person you were for the first 16 years of your life." But with the support of his community, Ben worked hard to recover and returned to the Kitchener Rangers two seasons later. In his last year as a Ranger, he captained the team.

On recovering from a concussion, Ben said, "It's not easy to talk about an injury that people think is weak. When you're honest with people, they realize it's not a weakness; it's something tough that you have to go through. That honesty, that support is the biggest thing in concussion and head injury."

Ben is now an associate coach at the University of Waterloo Warriors men's hockey team and co-founder of EMPWR Foundation, a charitable movement created to advance the recovery of head injuries in sport. It's because of inspirational people like Ben, the Stringer family and my colleagues here, from Ottawa South and Nepean—we all worked together. There are, honestly, not enough stories of us all working together.

The Rowan's Law Advisory Committee members and countless others are here acknowledging Rowan's Law Day in the Legislature.

Earlier today, I read an article in the Globe and Mail by Charles Tator, and he says very clearly that the message

on concussions needs to be clear: “Prevent them. Recognize them. Diagnose them: Treat them expertly. These messages save lives and prevent disability.”

But we do need that final piece, that education piece, to make sure that coaches and players are treating concussions seriously. We need to work to get the ministry to develop those educational tools for parents. It's encouraging to hear about the social media campaign. Those tools are needed for parents, coaches and players so that everyone on the ice, on the court and on the field is playing safely. We also need to work to push those sport organizations to develop those concussion codes of conduct and removal-from-sport and return-to-sport protocols.

**1430**

The last thing: When we were discussing the final Rowan's Law bill, there was a recommendation that the government establish a committee or a group to monitor the government's progress on implementing these concussion protocols, and it would be good for everyone involved to know when that group is going to be created. I hope that is the next step.

It is in the public interest to do this right and in a timely fashion. We all care deeply about honouring Rowan's memory. Indeed, it is our shared responsibility in this House to do so. I look forward to seeing the progress we make as a province to make sure that tragedies like Rowan's death never happen again.

Finally, over my six years here at Queen's Park, the most rewarding work has been inspired by people like Gordon and Kathleen Stringer, who have effectively collaborated; they have lobbied for change to honour their daughter and to make this province a better place. You continue to inspire. Thank you so much for your work.

**Mr. John Fraser:** Point of order, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** The member for Ottawa South on a point of order.

**Mr. John Fraser:** Yes, I'd like to ask for unanimous consent to speak for up to five minutes to respond to the minister.

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** Agreed? Agreed. I recognize the member for Ottawa South.

**Mr. John Fraser:** I do want to say that I appreciate my colleagues letting me say a few words. I was with the member from Waterloo and with the member from Nepean-Carleton, the Minister of Children, Community and Social Services, part of the legislative team, part of the bigger Rowan's team that led to today.

I want to speak a bit more personally about Gordon and Kathleen first. I first met them a few years ago now, and I first heard their story at—I think it was—Nepean High School. What occurred to me is that their daughter—we all have kids. The thing that you don't imagine will ever happen to you, that you can't imagine, happens. It's a terrible thing, and when it's preventable, it makes it even more terrible.

The news of Rowan's passing, of course, in the day of social media and media, hit the news very quickly. But when you're consumed with grief and consumed with the shock of something like that happening, you don't expect

a call that says: “Hi, I'm calling from this outlet. Do you want to talk to us?” That's the last thing that you want to do, because you hurt. You hurt so bad you don't want to talk. You want to be alone; you want to be together. The world gets smaller.

They made a decision. They made a decision in, I think, a really short period of time—minutes—to say, “We're going to start to do something right now.” I don't think they knew where it was going to lead, quite frankly, which is to an even greater commitment to their daughter and to a greater cause, because it hurt. It hurt a lot. I can't imagine how much it hurt.

They had the courage to start to talk about what happened and to find a way so they could make sure that it would never happen to another child, another person. I want to thank them for that courage. It's incredible courage.

I know, Gordon, that you've heard me say this before, and I just wanted to thank you again, and Kathleen and all the Rowan's team. I was very fortunate that the member from Nepean-Carleton asked the member from Waterloo and I to participate. But the team is so much bigger. It's huge.

There is, as the member from Waterloo said, a lot of work that remains to be done—not just here in the province of Ontario but across Canada. We're a leader. You've helped us become a leader. We still have work to do to stay a leader.

Again, I want to thank all of my colleagues for the opportunity to say a few words today, and again, thank you to Gordon and Kathleen. We very much appreciate your leadership and your strength and your courage.

## PETITIONS

### LANDFILL

**Mr. John Vanthof:** “A petition to the Legislature of Ontario:

“We Call on Province for the Right of Communities to Approve Projects.

“Whereas municipal governments in Ontario do not have the right to approve landfill projects in their communities, but have authority for making decisions on all other types of development including nuclear power and nuclear waste facilities as well as casinos; and

“Whereas this outdated policy allows private landfill operators to consult with local residents and municipal councils, but essentially to ignore them; and

“Whereas the government has proposed through legislation (Bill 139) to grant municipalities additional authority and autonomy to make decisions for their communities; and

“Whereas the recent report from Ontario's Environmental Commissioner has found that Ontario has a garbage problem, particularly from industrial, commercial and institutional (ICI) waste generated within the city of Toronto, where diversion rates are as low as 15%; and

unless significant efforts are made in Toronto and area to increase recycling and diversion rates, a new home for this Toronto garbage will need to be found, as their landfill space is filling up quickly; and

“Whereas rural municipalities across Ontario are quietly being identified and targeted as potential landfill sites for future Toronto garbage by private landfill operators; and

“Whereas other communities should not be forced to take Toronto waste, as landfills can contaminate local watersheds, diminish air quality, dramatically increase heavy truck traffic on community roads, and reduce the quality of life for local residents;

“Therefore, we call upon the government of Ontario, and all political parties, to formally grant municipalities the authority to approve landfill projects in or adjacent to their communities, prior to June 2018.”

I wholeheartedly agree and sign my signature and hand it to Simon to give to the table.

## CURRICULUM

**Mr. Mike Schreiner:** I have a petition from my constituents to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

“Whereas the 2015 health and physical education curriculum was based on extensive province-wide consultation with parents, caregivers, educators, health and education experts;

“Whereas cancellation of the sexual health component of the 2015 health and physical education curriculum would place students at risk by withdrawing instructions on naming body parts and learning about responsible decision-making and consent, gender expression and gender identity, sexuality, sexual health, growth and development, LGBTQ issues and healthy views of body image;

“Whereas repealing the 2015 curriculum would not stop classroom issues arising for which students need factual, evidence-based and age-appropriate answers to support their understanding of healthy behaviour and healthy decision-making;

“Whereas the majority of parents support the 2015 health and physical education curriculum;

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

“That the Minister of Education not repeal the sexual health component of the 2015 health and physical education curriculum.”

I support this petition, will sign it and ask page Jocelyn to take it to the table.

## SOINS DE LONGUE DURÉE

### LONG-TERM CARE

**M. Taras Natyshak:** J’ai une pétition intitulée « Temps pour les soins ».

« À l’Assemblée législative de l’Ontario :

« Attendu que des soins de qualité pour les 78 000 résidents des maisons de SLD est une priorité pour les familles de l’Ontario; et

« Attendu que le gouvernement provincial ne fournit pas un financement adéquat pour assurer un niveau de soins et de personnel dans les foyers de SLD afin de répondre à l’augmentation de l’acuité des résidents et du nombre croissant de résidents ayant des comportements complexes; et

“Whereas several Ontario coroners’ inquests into LTC homes deaths have recommended an increase in direct hands-on care for residents and staffing levels and the most reputable studies on this topic recommends 4.1 hours of direct care per day;

**1440**

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

“Amend the Long-Term Care Homes Act (2007) for a legislated minimum care standard of four hours per resident per day, adjusted for acuity level and case mix.”

I support this petition and will affix my name and send it to the Clerks’ table via our page Aaliyah.

## DISCRIMINATION

**M<sup>me</sup> Nathalie Des Rosiers:** “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the Ontario Human Rights Code currently includes race, place of origin, gender identity, family status and disability among other things as prohibited grounds of discrimination;

“Whereas the purpose of the Human Rights Code is to protect the dignity and equality rights of individuals in a variety of settings, by prohibiting discrimination from employers, landlords, store owners and others;

“Whereas communities are often discriminated against based on their social condition, genetic characteristics and police records;

“Whereas everyone in the province of Ontario has the right to equal treatment, without discrimination;

“Whereas Ontario requires a legal framework to strike out all discrimination;

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

“That members of the Legislative Assembly of Ontario support” amendments to “the Human Rights Code with respect to immigration status, genetic characteristics, police records and social conditions.”

I agree with this petition. I’ll be happy to sign it and give it to page Will.

## SERVICES FOR PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

**Mr. Percy Hatfield:** “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas when children living with developmental disabilities turn 18, support from the Ontario government drastically changes;

“Whereas families in Windsor-Essex and across Ontario are met with continuous waiting lists and other challenges when trying to access support under the Passport Program;

“Whereas waiting lists place enormous stress on caregivers, parents, children and entire families;

“Whereas it is difficult to access safe and affordable housing, adequate supports and respite services without immediate access to Passport funding;

“Whereas all Ontarians living with developmental disabilities are entitled to a seamless transition of services from childhood to adulthood;

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

“To take immediate action to eliminate the current waiting lists for Passport funding so that people living with developmental disabilities and their families can access the support they deserve.”

Speaker, I fully agree. I'm going to sign this petition and hand it off to Alexander to bring up to the front table.

#### NORTHERN HEALTH SERVICES

**M<sup>me</sup> France Gélinas:** I would like to thank Mr. Fern Gladu from Val Therese in my riding for signing this petition. It goes as follows:

“Save the Breast Screening and Assessment Service.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“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 breast screening service “will only take us backwards”;

They petition the Legislative Assembly as follows:

“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 support this petition and will affix my name to it and ask my good page Josh to bring it to the Clerk.

#### CURRICULUM

**Ms. Catherine Fife:** “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 Premier Ford and the Conservative government is dragging Ontario backward, 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 backward.”

It's my pleasure to affix my signature to this petition and give the petition to page Simon.

#### AFFORDABLE HOUSING

**Mr. Percy Hatfield:** Again, to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas for families throughout much of Ontario, owning a home they can afford remains a dream, while renting is painfully expensive;

“Whereas consecutive Conservative and Liberal governments have sat idle, while housing costs spiralled out of control, speculators made fortunes, and too many families had to put their hopes on hold;

“Whereas every Ontarian should have access to safe, affordable housing. Whether a family wants to rent or own, live in a house, an apartment, a condominium or a co-op, they should have affordable options;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to immediately prioritize the repair of Ontario's social housing stock, commit to building new affordable homes, crack down on housing speculators, and make rentals more affordable through rent controls and updated legislation.”

I agree. I'm going to sign this and hand it off to Derek to bring up to the front.

#### CURRICULUM

**Mr. Taras Natyshak:** This is a petition from members of the Islington United Church here in Toronto that reads:

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas for six years the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (TRC) listened to thousands of former students of residential schools and their families testify to the devastating legacy of this national policy of assimilation;

“Whereas the TRC calls upon ‘the federal, provincial and territorial governments, in consultation and collaboration with survivors, Aboriginal peoples and educators, to make age-appropriate curriculum on residential schools, treaties and Aboriginal peoples' historical and contemporary contributions to Canada a mandatory education

requirement for kindergarten to grade 12 students' (CA 62.1); and

"Whereas on July 15, 2015, Canada's Premiers indicated their support for all 94 Truth and Reconciliation Commission calls to action and said they would act on them in their own provinces and territories;

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

"That the Legislative Assembly of Ontario urge the government of Ontario to fully implement such a curriculum for kindergarten through grade 12; and

"Whereas, in 2017, the government of Ontario had taken first steps to fulfill this action with a planned completion date of fall 2018;

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

"That the Ontario Ministry of Education immediately complete and implement the comprehensive revision of history, social studies, civics and other curriculum for kindergarten through grade 12 to fulfill the goals cited in call to action 62.i from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission report."

I support this petition, will affix my name and send it to the Clerks' table via page Will.

#### INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS

**Ms. Catherine Fife:** This is a petition called "Stop the Cuts to Indigenous Reconciliation."

"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 since time immemorial;

"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 ... 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 cooperative, 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)."

It's my pleasure to affix my signature, as I fully support this petition, and give it to page Josh.

1450

#### GASOLINE PRICES

**M<sup>me</sup> France Gélinas:** I would like to thank Faye Moffatt from Hanmer in my riding for this petition. It reads as follows:

"Gas prices.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas northern Ontario motorists continue to be subject to wild fluctuations in the price of gasoline; and

"Whereas the province could eliminate opportunistic price gouging and deliver fair, stable and predictable fuel prices; and

"Whereas five provinces and many US states already have some sort of gas price regulation; and

"Whereas jurisdictions with gas price regulation have seen an end to wild price fluctuations, a shrinking of price discrepancies between urban and rural communities and lower annualized gas prices";

They petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"Mandate the Ontario Energy Board to monitor the price of gasoline across Ontario in order to reduce price volatility and unfair regional price differences while encouraging competition."

I support this petition and will affix my name to it and ask my good page Simon to bring it to the Clerk.

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** That concludes the time that we have available for petitions this afternoon.

#### ORDERS OF THE DAY

##### SELECT COMMITTEE ON FINANCIAL TRANSPARENCY

Resuming the debate adjourned on September 26, 2018, on the amendment to the motion regarding the appointment of a Select Committee on Financial Transparency.

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** Further debate?

**Mrs. Robin Martin:** I rise today to speak on the motion. I'm going to share my time with the member from Barrie-Springwater-Oro-Medonte.

I'll just talk about the Select Committee on Financial Transparency. One of the reasons that I ran in the last election was because of the dire financial and fiscal situation that the previous Liberal government has left our province in. Frankly, nobody can deny that we are in a very precarious fiscal situation here in Ontario. Despite the Liberals telling us there was a \$600-million surplus in their 2017-18 books, we learned that there was actually a \$3.7-billion deficit in those books.

Sadly, the most shocking part of the 2017-18 public accounts was not the fact that we had a hidden deficit, but the fact that the Auditor General had signed off on them, which has not happened for some time around these parts. You see, for the last three years under the previous Liberal government, the Auditor General refused to do just that.

Instead, she issued what is called a “qualified opinion,” meaning the government of the day was unable or unwilling to answer outstanding questions about their accounting methods. This is simply incredible. As the Minister of Finance said in this House yesterday, there are no ifs, ands or buts in accounting; numbers are supposed to add up. Well, they certainly didn't under the previous Liberal government.

That's why one of our government's first actions after taking office was initiating the Independent Financial Commission of Inquiry to sort out why the numbers were not adding up. The commission of inquiry was given a broad and expansive mandate under the province's Public Inquiries Act and was specifically asked to perform a retrospective assessment of government accounting practices and to review, assess and provide an opinion on Ontario's actual budgetary position.

I'm very thankful that we did just that, because we now know that Ontario is on track to post a \$15-billion deficit in the current fiscal year. That's more than double what the previous Liberal government claimed in their budget just a few short months ago.

It's clear the last government was afraid or unwilling to be up front with the people of Ontario about our true fiscal situation. The Auditor General concluded as much when she said that the Liberal government's pre-election report was “not a reasonable presentation of Ontario's finances” and noting that “the government is making up its own accounting rules.” The Auditor General's use of words like “conceal” and “bogus” or “deceptive” or “unreliable” in reports on the previous government's finances is simply unprecedented in our provincial history.

Much of this comes out of the previous government's fair hydro plan, when they attempted to reduce hydro rates to make up for the fact that they tripled and quadrupled them. We learned last year that this will cost anywhere between \$45 billion and \$93 billion, depending on how much the government has to borrow over the next 29 years. These numbers are simply shocking.

Of course, as we all know, the Auditor General revealed that the last government created a complicated financing structure designed to keep the true cost of the plan off the province's books so as not to show a deficit or an increased debt. The fact that they were keeping the cost of this plan off the books is unprecedented in Ontario's history, and it can't be allowed to happen again. Adding insult to injury, the Auditor General noted that by structuring the borrowing off the province's books, it would cost the government \$4 billion extra in borrowing costs over the lifetime of the plan.

This is very disappointing. But what's even more disappointing, in my mind, are those who say, as we've heard recently again, “We already knew they were cooking the books,” or, “Nothing to see here. It's just an accounting dispute.” Well, notwithstanding that the actual numbers are worse than either the Auditor General or the Financial Accountability Officer could have predicted, the fact that our independent watchdogs were able to see right through the creative accounting does not make it all right. It is

simply unacceptable. We all have a responsibility and an obligation to ensure that it does not ever happen again. That's where our Select Committee on Financial Transparency comes in.

The people of Ontario, the people who elected us and sent us here, deserve transparency. They deserve to know what happened. They deserve to know if there was a deliberate attempt to hide the true state of Ontario's finances from them and to make sure that we never knew the extent of the debt and the deficit that has been accumulated under the previous Liberal government. We need to make certain that this type of activity can never happen again in Ontario because ultimately it is the confidence of the public in the government that is at risk. If a government cannot be trusted to be open and honest about something as significant, as fundamental, as the state of the province's finances—how can they possibly be expected to believe what their government says about anything else? It is critical, and it's an obligation that we have to future generations. I have children. This is scandalous, and it is unfair to children. It is unfair to any young people, frankly, to have this kind of uncertainty and disrespect around the whole institution of government.

**1500**

Let's talk more about the true state of Ontario's finances. To get the full picture, our government also recently commissioned a line-by-line review of government spending. As you know, the results of that review are in. What we saw under the previous government, as you all know, was 15 years of mismanaged spending. Ontario's debt is \$338 billion and, as you know, I'm sure, this is unfortunately, scandalously, the largest subnational debt in the world.

**Mr. Gilles Bisson:** It's yours now.

**Mrs. Robin Martin:** It's all of ours. Every man, woman and child in this province owes \$24,000. It was put on top of them, and they're made to be responsible for it without having a say in that, especially the young people. Young people who didn't have a chance to vote didn't have a say but have been saddled with debt. That is just not right. It is not fair what we've done to them. The Liberal government is primarily responsible for it, although they were supported by the opposition, as well.

The current debt-to-GDP ratio is resting very close to 40%. It's at an uncomfortable 39%, on the precipice of what everybody says is the time you worry, at 40%. A 40% debt-to-GDP ratio is a big problem. Interest payments on our current debt, as you may know, amount to about—

*Interjections.*

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** I'm sorry to have to interrupt the member, but I would ask the two members who are engaging in a conversation audibly across the aisle to cease so that we can hear the member for Eglinton-Lawrence, who has the floor.

Again, I apologize.

**Mrs. Robin Martin:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Interest payments on our current debt, as you know, are now the fourth-largest line item in the provincial budget. I believe it's \$12.5 billion annually in interest payments on

the debt. That is a significant amount of money that, unfortunately, is not going to the services Ontarians are looking for, the services the opposition calls for every day. That money is being sent off to bankers, basically, to pay interest on the provincial debt. That money should be going to service the needs of Ontarians and to provide the kinds of supports that everybody in this House would like to provide to them, but instead it's dissipated and wasted. That, too, is a scandal. It makes it very difficult to make sure that we can provide those important services that everybody is looking for. There's no end to the demands, obviously, but we would like to fulfill them by having that money to spend not on interest payments, but on those services—on those important health, social and education services that everyone is relying on.

In real terms, our total operating expenditures have inflated by 55%, a spending increase of \$2,226 for every man, woman and child in the province. That's a substantial increase. Had the previous Liberal government simply shown a little bit of restraint and held expenditures to population growth, the government of Ontario would have spent \$331 billion less over 15 years, and that would be an amazing result. That would be almost the entire amount of our debt right now.

It would be great if they had just shown a little restraint, but restraint wasn't in their minds. They were spending money left, right and centre. Certainly when I was knocking on doors, people said to me—even people who had previously supported that government said to me, "When is the spending going to stop? They're out of control. Make it stop." It was kind of shocking, even to people who had previously supported them, that they seemed to admit that there were no limits. They didn't see any reason to limit their spending in any way. They just spent, and it was actually shocking even to their supporters. I think that's part of the reason why the election went the way it did, because certainly people told me that they were appalled by the spending without constraint, spending willy-nilly.

As I said, the total amount that they could have saved, had they restrained spending to match population growth, would have been \$331 billion over 15 years, a significant amount of money, and as I said, that's almost exactly the whole amount of Ontario's total debt burden. Wouldn't it be nice if we didn't have to face that debt burden, which is a big challenge for every person in Ontario?

We need to move forward to build a fiscally sustainable government. The NDP members opposite like to talk a lot about sustainability, so you'd think they would be on board with this. We have to have a fiscally sustainable government to make sure that we can provide the kinds of services we want, that everybody wants for all Ontarians so they can have those services, but we have to be able to sustain those services. We need to reform the public services in a way that puts reliability and the taxpayer at the centre of everything we do and puts structures in place that create a culture of efficiency so that we get the most value out of every tax dollar.

The work ahead will be difficult, but the proper management of public finances is a moral imperative that can

no longer be ignored. We must be forward-thinking and nimble enough to change the business of government. We will put the people at the centre of every service, every regulation, every program, process and policy, because that's what governing is about—being for the people. It is our duty to give all Ontarians the platform to share their ideas, listen and act. "For the people" is not simply our mantra; it is the core of how our government operates. But before we can do any of that, we owe it to the people to restore their faith and trust etc. in the accountability of government, because only when government truly accounts to the people can we begin to put the province back on a path to balance, a path to fiscal sustainability.

This all starts by appointing our select committee to build on the work of the Independent Financial Commission of Inquiry—one that will have the power to call witnesses, compel documents and to gather evidence. The committee will 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 will deem relevant.

#### 1510

The importance of the select committee cannot be understated. We're not just dealing with billions of dollars in wasteful spending. The Liberal government that was formerly here was known for making promises it couldn't afford to keep, that the taxpayers couldn't afford to keep. What we're really dealing with is a system of accounting schemes that kept this spending off this government's books. Rather than being upfront about the real cost of their disastrous policy decisions, the previous Liberal government buried the debt so the public could not see its true extent. That is why this select committee is so important. The people of Ontario were not told the truth, and they deserve answers.

The select committee will find those answers. They will find out how the previous Liberal government made up its own accounting rules. They will find out how billions of dollars in deficits were buried in convoluted accounting schemes. They will find out how the Liberals ignored the warnings of the Auditor General, even after she called them out on their "bogus" accounting. Most importantly, the select committee will discover who ordered this massive scheme and will hold those responsible accountable.

We will call witnesses, compel documents and gather evidence, and the committee will get the answers, because the people of Ontario deserve an explanation. The committee will be able to hold those responsible for misrepresenting the deficit and ensure this activity is not allowed again in the future. They will find the answers that the people of Ontario are asking for: how the previous government came up with their own accounting rules to avoid scrutiny, hid billions of dollars of debt off the public books and got away, for a while, with ignoring the legitimate concerns of the Auditor General.

It's time that the people of Ontario finally get the answers they deserve. It's time we restore faith in government.

**The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls):** Further debate? Further debate? I recognize the member for Toronto–Danforth.

**Mr. Bill Walker:** Just under the wire.

**Mr. Peter Tabuns:** Just under the wire.

Thank you, Speaker. I appreciate the opportunity to address this matter. I had the opportunity earlier today to read the comments of the finance minister in Hansard. I wanted to touch on some of those things, and I also wanted to speak to the matters raised by our House leader, the member from Timmins, and our finance critic, the member from—oh, my goodness—Hamilton West–Ancaster–Dundas. Those names are getting too long—too long.

In any event, looking at the finance minister's comments, he has, as you're well aware, Speaker, brought forward a motion that we have an investigation, a select committee, to look at the books and to report back "on the accounting practices, decision-making and policy objectives of the previous government...."

Now, I have to say to you right now, Speaker, I think it's pretty obvious to all of us what their goals were: to get re-elected. We know they engaged in accounting practices that obscured reality. The decision-making—I know this may be a shock to many, but I think it was the Premier and her cabinet who made these decisions. So I'm curious to see exactly what the government's agenda is on this, other than theatre, because I think most of what we need to know is already visible.

Nonetheless, I want to say that one of the points that the Minister of Finance made when he talked about the Liberals' fun with numbers was that they had booked \$1.4 billion in efficiencies in their budget. He said, and he was pretty clear, "They wouldn't know an efficiency if they stepped on it. Believe me, we're going to show what efficiencies are."

Now, Speaker, I do worry a bit about this government and their concept of efficiencies because, as far as I can tell, "efficiencies" means cutting things, cutting them drastically, and causing a lot of damage in our community. We saw that with the previous Conservative government 15 years ago.

One of the things that he notes is the cut to OHIP+ and the idea that, effectively, public support would be drawn back and private insurers would be carrying on the bulk of the business. He could make the same argument with OHIP. He could say, "We can have all the private insurers pay first, and then we'll pick up the rest," effectively a system that, with some modifications, has been going on in the United States for a long time—not particularly cost-effective. It may mean that government spends less, but it means that the society as a whole spends much more.

A few years ago I had an opportunity to read the book *A Governor's Story*, by the former governor of Michigan, Jennifer Granholm. Ms. Granholm was talking about the competitive difficulties that Michigan had taking on Ontario as an auto manufacturing jurisdiction. One of the things that she found really powerful on Ontario's side was OHIP—single-payer health insurance—because the Michigan industries could not match the economies of

scale that we had here. We had a single payer. We didn't have multiple companies duplicating claims offices, duplicating accounting. We have a much cheaper system than Michigan, because it's single-payer, publicly run.

In making the changes that the minister has made to OHIP+, he has exposed us—our society, not necessarily our government—to higher costs. Because the reality is, when you have a single payer rather than a huge range of players, then you can have efficiencies of operation and scale that you can't have with multiple companies.

I often hear conservative politicians talking about duplication of efforts—one of the things that they get upset with, with governments. But in fact, if you have the private sector duplicating those efforts, the cost is still borne by the people as a whole.

In fact, the Parliamentary Budget Office looked at the savings that Canada would enjoy from running a national pharmacare service, and that, Speaker, is substantial. The Parliamentary Budget Office estimated that, as opposed to the roughly \$25 billion a year that Canadians—Canadian companies, Canadian individuals and Canadian governments—spent on prescriptions, if we had one, single, national pharmacare program, we could save over \$4 billion a year in Canada on the cost of prescriptions.

*Applause.*

**Mr. Peter Tabuns:** Exactly, exactly. There is a huge advantage to having a single payer and a single administration. So when this Minister of Finance says, "We cut OHIP+ back"—and there were a lot of problems with OHIP+; it was a Liberal program, after all. But in cutting back OHIP+, what they've done is rolled us backwards in terms of having greater efficiencies in health care costs. And that is an undermining of our economy and an undermining of the well-being of the people of this province.

It was interesting. A professor in the School of Population and Public Health at the University of BC was interviewed by the CBC on this whole matter, and he noted that you actually can save money substantially by having a single national pharmacare program, because, as happens in other countries—Australia, New Zealand, the UK, some Scandinavian countries—the national pharmacare program can sit down with pharma companies and negotiate prices. And they can get better prices.

You like to buy wholesale, don't you? You don't like to buy retail. You prefer wholesale. I know you, Speaker. It's the way you think.

So the idea that simply cutting provides efficiencies is not reflected in the real world, and I, frankly, think that's where this minister is going. That's what he talks about when he talks about efficiencies.

To be fair, the former Liberal government was all into cutting as well. I didn't see a lot of efficiencies. I didn't see a lot of working smarter. What I saw was a reduction in services. We know what we invest per capita in our post-secondary education. I think it's the lowest in Canada. We've had substantial cuts in our health care system. We have all talked about hallway medicine. We've lived it; we've had friends who have been in that situation. We know that's the reality. These aren't efficiencies; these are

cuts, reductions in services to cut expenditure, not actually thinking and acting in a smarter way to get more out of each dollar.

That's, frankly, what I expect from this government and that's what I expect from this finance minister.

**1520**

In the most recent report—for which, I gather, we paid about a million dollars—there's a recommendation to provide public finance to charter schools, a Betsy DeVos–Donald Trump kind of approach to education. Now, that might reduce some public costs for education—although I would want to see the numbers to be certain—but I think what it would really mean is a substantial reduction in the quality of public education; far more reduction in quality than benefit in financial savings. It doesn't make sense to me. The idea that it would even make it into a report that would come to the government says that the quality of that report is very low, or alternatively, that instructions were given to those who were writing the report. Right off the top, they were told, “You're going to have to cut things. You're going to have to privatize things. These are the things we want you to mention.” Either way, it's not exactly value for money.

It's interesting to me that the finance minister talked about the practice of the Liberals to sell assets and put the one-time revenue into their budgets. He mentions the OPG building and the sale of LCBO lands into general revenue. Do you know what, Speaker? The Minister of Finance is entirely right. He's entirely right. When Mike Harris sold the 407 at fire sale prices, he was able to reduce his deficit going into an election. Did Ontario benefit from that? No; we got hosed. That has been a political issue in Ontario ever since, because drivers find the cost is extraordinary. When you look back at the numbers, the 407 was built at a cost of \$1.5 billion. It was sold at \$3 billion, but the actual value of the lease, when you look at the revenue generated, is \$12 billion. It was a giveaway. But the Premier of the day was able to get cash in the door and say, “Our deficit is reduced.”

So what did the Liberals do? They followed the course of the Conservatives. It's the same approach to finances: selling off assets and selling off the furniture to pay the rent. It doesn't make sense. To say that the purpose of this whole process is to ensure it will never happen again—well, Speaker, I've seen the cycle.

I'll just note again that the 407 consortium had a profit of \$222 million on gross revenues of \$887 million in 2014. Man, that's a good return. That's good money. In fact, the consortium that owns the 407 boosted dividends to shareholders by 75% in—I think it was 2016.

The Conservative government of the time hurt this province and hurt the people of this province. For anyone who represents an area in the 905 or drives into Toronto and relies on the 407, always remember that what the Liberals did in terms of selling off assets to boost their bottom line is what Mike Harris did, and they are paying for it every day.

More recently, the Liberals sold off Hydro One, and the reason that was given for the sale of Hydro One is that the

money would be used for transit infrastructure. You know, Speaker, you've got to have a lot of nerve to be able to say that with a straight face because, as far as we can tell from looking at public accounts, none of that money ever flowed into transit. It will be interesting to see, if this committee actually does work; I think all the money just flowed into general revenue and it was part of their—what can I say?—deficit-prettying-up project more than anything else.

So we have Mike Harris selling off the 407 to make his books look good. We have Kathleen Wynne selling off Hydro One to make the books look good. It's a bad practice all around.

Interestingly, the finance minister goes on to talk about the Liberals pursuing a reckless spree of debt-finance spending. For one of my many sins in my life, I had an opportunity when I was a city councillor to look at the Mike Harris finances a few years into their being elected. I know that this will shock you, Speaker, because you're an upright, balance-the-books kind of guy, but Mike Harris borrowed money to give tax cuts. That's extraordinary. Can you imagine standing up in this place and saying, “I'm going to borrow a billion bucks so I can give it away”?

**Mr. Bill Walker:** I can imagine you doing it, actually.

**Mr. Peter Tabuns:** Ah, Speaker. I think one should look at the actual record of the Conservative Party and the way it has abused public finance. They went deeper into deficit to give tax cuts.

So there's no question in this case that the pot and the kettle are slugging it out. But the reality is they are both on the fire and they're both putting us on the fire. That was an ugly time. So to say that the Liberals were doing something that Conservatives hadn't done—well, not that I'm a friend of the Liberals, but it's all the same.

Now, interestingly, the finance minister also said that the “select committee will get to the bottom of who knew what and who did what about it. We'll learn the truth.” You know, in the odd byways and back alleys of the Internet, you occasionally will come across, when you do a search, the Illuminati—these weird YouTube videos on the secret sect running the world and doing bad things. I have to say, it's not particularly my cup of tea, but I think the finance minister in all this is ignoring what's directly in front of him. Who made these decisions about the Enron-style accounting with the fair hydro plan? Who engaged in selling off assets to boost the look of the books? It was Premier Wynne and the Liberal cabinet. I don't know if you need to go a lot further. I think it was pretty straightforward—straightforward to all of us who were in this chamber before the last election. There was no mystery. I wasn't thinking there was some secret banker in Tokyo who was pulling the strings. No. I could look across and say, “Yes, you guys, you're engaged in fudging the books. You're playing with numbers. You're being creative with the truth.”

It will be interesting to see what the government really wants to do with this committee. But if you want to know now who made these decisions, who did all these bad

things, I think it's public record. I don't think you have to worry or dig any further.

Now, the finance minister talks about the Liberals' fair hydro plan. He makes some good criticisms, because in fact it was very apparent prior to the election that the Liberals were borrowing buckets of money. They were using OPG as a more-than-arm's-length entity to carry the can for all that. At the time, when we were discussing this, I had a chance to talk to media and I referred to it as "Enron accounting." Now, for those who are not familiar with Enron—yes, there are a few who are familiar with it—it was an American energy company that went bankrupt around 2002. It was famous for setting up these special-purpose entities that would absorb debt, carry on other contracts, and get things off Enron's books so that they would look like they were doing just fine.

Ontario's Financial Accountability Officer did a critique of the Enron-style accounting engaged in by the Liberals. He pointed out that if Ontario had simply borrowed the money directly, the several billion a year it's borrowing to reduce hydro prices, we'd save about \$4 billion in interest. That is something that our current Minister of Finance refers to.

The question I have for you and I have for him is this: Are you shutting that down and just borrowing it directly to avoid the \$4 billion? I haven't seen any bills come forward. I've seen no announcements. So we are still paying this extra premium on insurance that the Tories condemned when they were in opposition. They're doing exactly what the Liberals were doing.

We had one of the members before I spoke talking about the \$45-billion to \$93-billion scale of debt that we could be saddled with, with continuation of this Liberal "fair hydro plan." People know that the plan was keeping rates down for about four years, and then they'd start going up 6% a year after that. Frankly, there are all kinds of costs that are building up in the system, even as we speak, that will give us some of the highest hydro rates in North America—in real terms, the highest rates in North America, because we are going to be paying back for this Enron-style scheme. But I haven't heard a word from the government that they are going to shut it down—not a word.

I was in the chamber when Mr. Fedeli, in his previous incarnation—the member from Nipissing—was going after the Liberal government on it. Now he's got the power. Is he going to end this special-purpose entity, this hiding of the numbers in OPG? Is he going to borrow money directly to avoid higher interest costs? And even more to the point, is he going to put in place the Tory hydro plan so that this Liberal one can be retired and we don't get stuck with \$45 billion to \$93 billion in liability? That's the question. I say that's far more important than finding out if the Illuminati had membership in the Liberal cabinet in the last government. It's far more important—not that I believe in the illuminati, but that's how he has phrased his whole proposal.

1530

My colleague the member from Timmins has proposed a number of amendments to this motion asking that every

member of the committee be allowed to call witnesses and that it not simply be the government calling witnesses. I sat on the gas plant inquiry. The member from Nipissing and I, and the government members, called witnesses. Frankly, everyone had their own perspective. There were things that I didn't pick up that the member from Nipissing did; there were things I picked up that he didn't pick up on. In fact, I was the one who realized that the Liberals were destroying their records and made that public. If he actually wants an inquiry that's effective, make sure that all of the members have the ability to call witnesses, so you have a variety of perspectives looking at the situation.

The other thing the member from Timmins put forward an amendment for was that it not simply be retrospective, but forward-looking. How do we ensure we don't have Enron-style accounting in the future? Just saying the Liberals were bad may be objectively true, but it's not enough. If people really want honest accounting in the future, what structures are we going to have to ensure that that happens so that we don't get another sale of the 407, with the money just funnelled into general revenues so the books look good for an election? How does that actually happen?

I think it would make tons of sense for people to support the amendment from the member for Timmins and actually do what needs to be done to sort out the books of this province.

**The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls):** Further debate? The member from Sault Ste. Marie.

**Mr. Ross Romano:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I always appreciate the exuberance with which you introduce the members.

I want to thank everybody for speaking to this at this point. I do want to make a few comments—I suppose 20 minutes' worth of comments.

Our party ran on certain priorities. We ran on basic priorities and principles because we believed it was important to speak to the people of Ontario on a very simplistic level. It's not about major platform promises; it's about getting a sense of what your priorities are as a party and where you would like to move as a party if in government. We spoke about our five priorities, and one of the most principal priorities we spoke about was trust and accountability in government and restoring trust and accountability in government.

There was clearly, in this election, a statement made by the people of this province that they had lost their sense of trust and accountability in government. It was so much more apparent as the polls closed and results came in on the night of June 7, 2018, that our government—our newly elected government for the people of Ontario—needed to work hard at restoring that trust and accountability.

During the campaign, Premier Ford spoke at length promising that, if elected, our government for the people would do everything it would take to restore that trust and accountability, that our government for the people would create a commission of inquiry to look into the reckless spending of the former Liberal government. That was a promise made and a promise kept.

There were reasons for that promise, simple reasons— not complex at all. Rewind the clocks back a little over a year ago. The Auditor General issued a report. We had just learned that the then-Liberal government introduced a budget where they said there was going to be a \$6.7-billion deficit. The Auditor General looked at that and said, “No, the accounting is wrong. It’s actually \$11.7 billion, versus \$6.7 billion”—a difference of \$5 billion.

That’s not a small number to scoff at. That’s scary. That’s a scary, scary notion, that what was projected by then-government officials was almost double what it really was. Then, what we saw in the weeks that followed was that our Auditor General, the independent watchdog of the Ontario government, got chastised and dragged through the mud by that very Liberal government.

So there was a lot of reason to make a promise to restore trust and accountability in government. There was a lot of good reason to explain to the people of Ontario that, if elected, our government would look into the matter. And look into it we did. Immediately after the election, a commission of inquiry was formed, and it went through and, well, as we learned last Friday, the results are staggering—scary.

When I remember last year hearing the Auditor General say, “No, it’s not \$6.7 billion; it’s \$11.7 billion”—wow, that’s not an accounting mistake. They didn’t just forget to carry a “1”. That’s huge. That’s significant. But what we learned last Friday was it’s not even \$11.7 billion. In fact, I’m even going to go back. I’m going to go back to the 2017 budget. What was said in the 2017 budget? “We have a \$600-million surplus,” the people of Ontario were told. In reality, what we learned last Friday, was, no, in fact Ontario had a \$3.7-billion deficit in 2017.

To make a mistake in accounting of \$4.3 billion in 2017—pretty scary. Do you think it might rock people at their core, the citizens of this province? Do you think it might cause them to be concerned with respect to the veracity of their elected officials, with respect to the honesty and integrity of them? Do you think it might cause them to lack trust in their government? I would think so.

But the story got worse because then 2018 came out and we learned that \$6.7 billion, which is a pretty shocking number to begin with, was actually \$15 billion. So we are at \$8.3 billion off. At \$8.3 billion off—

*Interjection.*

**Mr. Ross Romano:** You know, that’s fair. So it was in there. We know that there was a huge discrepancy, okay? So a discrepancy, whether you call it \$6 billion or whether you call it \$8.3 billion—are you really going to stand there, member, and try to tell us that that’s okay? Are you going to really suggest that that’s not a big deal? Because we are talking about billions of dollars. There are provinces in this country that can run an entire province with that money. Why don’t you acknowledge that?

*Interjections.*

**The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls):** Order.

1540

**Mr. Ross Romano:** It’s a shame, and it has caused the people of this province to lose faith in their government.

There’s only one number you need to look at—one—to prove that trust and accountability have been lost for the people of Toronto, and that number is seven. That’s the only number you need to look at. That will demonstrate, and it shows, that the people of this province have lost faith in their government.

It’s incumbent upon us to remedy that, and I don’t mean us on this side of the floor and partially on that side of the floor; I mean all of us, because to all my fellow members, of all colours: We have a fiduciary obligation to the people of the province. That means something important.

To simply say, “We knew about it. Why are you making a big stink about it now?” is not good enough. That’s not discharging a fiduciary obligation. That is one of the highest obligations there is for us as members and in law. We are tasked to spend people’s money in their best interests. When partisan lines are drawn, clearly we have discrepancies over how we spend that money. Everybody has different viewpoints, and that’s fair. I would fully expect all opposition members to fight and challenge with respect to the way the money is spent, and I would respect healthy debate in that regard. However, that’s not what we’re talking about. That is not at all what we’re talking about. We’re talking about our obligation to the people of this province. We’re talking about ensuring that the people of this province have faith, have trust, that we aren’t cheating them. When I say that the only number that matters is seven, it is clear that that trust is lost.

The purpose of this committee is very simple: It’s about restoring trust and accountability in government. It’s about making sure that the people of Ontario learn more. I’ve heard many members from the opposition say that this is just what Conservatives do. Every time they come into government, they criticize the books of the previous government. This isn’t that simple. This is a discrepancy of \$8.3 billion. That’s “billion” with a B. That’s not a simple discrepancy.

I think all of us here can agree that there’s a discrepancy. Shouldn’t we try to find out where it came from? Should we all not be motivated to know where it came from? If we all care about our fiduciary obligation to our constituents and to all the people of Ontario, isn’t it incumbent upon us to dig deeper than just simply saying, “Hey, we knew. Hey, there are only seven seats left for that government. Hey, they already got their slap,” if you will. It’s not good enough. That’s not what discharging a fiduciary obligation is—not even remotely close. It’s a far, far cry from it. To not dig deeper would be a complete disservice to the people of this province, to the hard-working people of Ontario who go to work every day and who expect that the taxes that are collected off of their paycheques will go to the things that matter to them, not to the things that don’t, and not that they would be cheated.

While I agree those are all important expenses—education and health—people care about those things. But do you know what? An \$8.3-billion difference? Wow, what you could do for education and health. Imagine that our province currently spends \$1.1 billion a month in interest alone because of the types of deficits we’ve run, because

of the debt we've racked up in this province—one of almost \$350 billion.

You want to talk about education and health care? Wow. Wow, what we could do. But don't the people of Ontario deserve to know what went wrong? Don't you think that through this committee we can really work together to get to the bottom of it and say, "Hey, we know there's a discrepancy, and it's a really big one"?

What caused that discrepancy? Was it a direct act, an intentional act to subvert and hide the truth from the people of this province? Is that what it was? Was it negligence? Was it merely a mistake? Did somebody forget to carry a "1"? What caused it? If was a direct act, who was responsible for it? Were they in government? Were they staff? Were they bureaucrats? Are they still in government? Are they still there?

Don't you think we'd want to prevent this from happening again? Don't you think the taxpayers want to ensure that this can't happen again? The answer is obvious, everybody. Clearly, people want to know that it can't happen again. Clearly, they want to prevent this type of an incident from ever arising again. But we're arguing. We're in here arguing about why we're doing this.

We're doing this, as I said, to restore trust and accountability in government; we're doing this to show the people of Ontario that they can trust their government, regardless of colour or stripe. We're doing this to ensure that we can prevent it from happening again. It's our job. It is what we were elected to do. If we care at all about what we are elected to do, we wouldn't be fighting over this.

I look at this position—when I ran to be an MPP for the city of Sault Ste. Marie, I did it because I wanted to do something good for my community; I wanted to help my city. I live in a small city in northern Ontario that has struggled for decades: youth-outward migration, aging demographics, skilled-trade gaps, infrastructure problems. I ran because I believed in my heart that I would be able to make a difference for the people of my community.

But I knew when I was elected that I had an obligation, that when I served the people of my community and when I stepped in this House and I served the people of this province, I held a seriously high obligation—it's called a fiduciary one; we've talked about it a bit now—and that I was required to ensure that every "i" was dotted, every "t" was crossed, and that everything was done to ensure that spending was done fairly, and while one party or another may not agree with the nature of how a dollar is spent, at least it was transparent; there was nothing hidden. There were no games. You may disagree, but here I am, palms out, showing what I'm all about, because that's how people have trust and accountability in their government. That's how we do it, folks. We have to be honest. We have to be here with clean hands, showing the world, showing the people of our province, what it is we are doing.

A \$600-million surplus; a \$3.7-billion deficit—you can't say that there wasn't a problem. You can't say that we knew the problem and we should just forget about it. A \$6.7-billion deficit; a \$15-billion deficit—how can anyone possibly say we should just forget about it? How can

anybody possibly say, in good conscience, that digging deeper is nothing more than a political ploy? How can you possibly look at your constituents and look at yourself in the mirror and say that? You're doing your job on behalf of the people of this province. It's their money. It's not ours; it's theirs. We have an obligation to ensure that they hold—

*Interjection.*

1550

**Mr. Ross Romano:** I'm glad the member from Timmins thinks it's a joke. I'm glad you think it's a joke that we're here trying to discharge our obligation. I'm glad you think it's funny. I don't think it's very funny. I don't think it's funny at all that the people of this province don't feel like they can trust their government. I don't think it's funny that year over year over year, fewer people go to the ballot boxes because they've lost faith in their government.

It's up to us to ensure that the people can start to regain trust in government. This isn't going to solve it in one fell swoop. This is not a magic wand that's going to solve all the woes of the world for the province of Ontario, but it's a necessary step in the right direction. That's what it's all about. That's why we're here. We're here to be honest with the people of our province, we're here to treat them fairly, and we're here to demonstrate that we deserve their trust.

I would encourage and expect every member in this House, unless they have something to hide, to support this motion so we can finally restore trust and accountability in this province.

**The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls):** Further debate?

**Ms. Catherine Fife:** It's a pleasure to join this debate. It is a debate on the value of the select committee that the government announced just yesterday or the day before—

**Mr. Gilles Bisson:** A couple of days ago.

**Ms. Catherine Fife:** A couple of days ago, yes.

That's how it has been going around here. Every day is a new day, and there's a new initiative and there's a new Ford commercial—what's it called? Ford, for the people—paid by the taxpayers of this province, telling us how great things are and how things are getting done.

To date, though, on the finances of this province, we've had the former Premier of BC do a review. It went through the summer. Those results are out. People got paid to do those reviews from the private sector—

**Mr. Gilles Bisson:** Very well paid too, I heard.

**Ms. Catherine Fife:**—very well-paid people to review the books that had already been reviewed by the Auditor General.

We've had the Ernst and Young report, the line-by-line—it's not really an audit. I want to be really clear about that. The Ernst and Young report is not an audit. It was paid for by the people of this province. That's not what that report is about at all. It's a very ideological document that the government has put out.

Now they've doubled down, if you will, on this select committee. The Select Committee on Financial Transparency is looking to—the government is looking for support for this concept that a committee of six PC MPPs and

three NDP MPPs 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—any other aspect that the committee thinks we should report on.

It's really interesting, because we have this independent officer of the Legislature—her name is Bonnie Lysyk. She is the Auditor General for the province of Ontario. Her independence matters in this place because she is removed from the partisanship of the discussion around the financial reporting of this government, of previous governments. She has an amazing staff who work with her, I have to tell you, and because I'm the new Chair of the public accounts committee, the responsibilities of that committee are very much aligned with looking at the books of the province retroactively. That's the role of the Auditor General. That is her legislative responsibility; that's what she is paid to do. And she falls under very strict guidelines to do that work.

The Financial Accountability Officer, on the other hand, is forward-looking and looks at the financial records from a futuristic perspective, as he did with the impact of what the government of the day used to call the fair hydro plan; we called it the "unfair hydro plan," for very good reasons. That Financial Accountability Officer is also an independent officer of the Legislature, and therefore looks at those financial documents and those economic projections through a lens that is independent of any political party. Both of those independent officers take their responsibilities very seriously.

I just came back from a training session on the importance of the public accounts committee, where six members from the PC side sit on that committee and three New Democrats. You can see that there's a little bit of duplication here. I think that the public accounts committee, though, has that added advantage of having independence, so we will not be accused of looking at an issue through a partisan lens.

In fact, at this training session that I just came back from, the United Kingdom has a public accounts committee and all the members sit together. There's no one side where there's a Conservative and one side where there's a Liberal. They all sit together because the work that they are charged with doing is looking at the finances of the respective organization—which would be the United Kingdom, or a county or a province—and holding the powers that be, regardless of their party, to account and really, essentially, speaking truth to power.

A very powerful quote that I heard this weekend was that public money has no party; it is the public's money. It is the citizens of the province to whom we have a shared responsibility to ensure that funding goes to the initiatives and the priorities of the people.

It's really interesting: I'm sitting beside the Auditor General at this conference, and I'm learning and finding out what other jurisdictions, what other provinces do with their public accounts committees and how they work. And then we both read this announcement that the government

has now proposed a select committee to essentially do what the public accounts committee does.

You can guess what my response would be: Let's just put the legislative committee to work. We're here; we're ready. We have last year's Auditor General's reports. We have 15 years of reports that the Auditor General put out, which would ideally inform public policy, government policy on (1) how to find efficiencies, because they are actually in the reports; and (2) how to reduce waste, because they are actually in those reports and have been red-flagged and identified as poor choices that the government of the day had made.

Quite honestly, even this notion—and the member from Sault Ste. Marie was really stuck on this: Why wouldn't we do something about it? Well, we do want to do something about it, but we already have the information. We have the information because the Auditor General released her Review of the 2018 Pre-Election Report on Ontario's Finances. She called those finances into question, and she did so for good reason. On page 5 of the report, which came out in April, just five months ago, she says, "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.... After adjusting for these items, the annual deficit would be \$11.7 billion for 2018-19 (or 75% more than the reported \$6.7 billion), \$12.2 billion for 2019-20 ... and \$12.5 billion for 2020-21 (or 92% more than the reported \$6.5 billion)." We have actually good data to work from. We have good data to inform how to find some efficiencies. We may disagree on how to find those efficiencies, but the information is there.

**1600**

The Auditor General also reported that "the government did not properly record the true financial impact of the fair hydro plan's electricity rate reduction in the pre-election report." This was also confirmed by the Financial Accountability Officer, who we successfully negotiated for during the minority government. We thought it was prudent to have a budgetary officer to look at the expenses from a future perspective.

The Auditor General also goes on to say, especially around the fair hydro plan—and I think that this is really key, Mr. Speaker, because this government has embraced the fair hydro plan's electricity rate reduction, instead of dealing with it in a progressive way, even though they complained extensively about what we call the "unfair hydro plan." But the auditor says, "Neither the expenses to pay power generators nor the interest on the funds borrowed to pay power generators have been included in the expense estimates in the pre-election report. As a result, the combined other program and interest expenses are understated by \$2.4 billion in 2018-19, \$2.6 billion in 2019-20 and \$2.8 billion"—and that brings you to a grand total of \$15 billion.

Now, what's interesting for us—and I guess it's primarily because we are members who have previously worked with the opposition at one point. We thought we were on the side of angels. That's what they say about public accounts committees, and I really like that a lot, because

you are actually following the money. When you follow the money, you follow the real priorities of any government at any level.

I worked very closely with the now-Minister of Finance for many years, travelling around the province, comparing notes, digging past the first layer and scratching the surface and sometimes getting more surface, but really doing some good work, I felt. We both felt strongly that the Auditor General was correct in her assumptions. I'm happy that the government has now accepted those assumptions, because both on the fair hydro plan and on the pension plan, the Auditor General could not write a report acknowledging those, because the government said that they could spend the money, even though they couldn't.

But the Minister of Finance, then finance critic, really felt strongly, as I do, about the Auditor General. You have this public accounts committee. You have the same membership that the government is proposing in the select committee. We all take our responsibilities very seriously. We have the Auditor General and her entire office at our disposal to do the very work that the select committee is proposing.

I guess the question remains, why put a partisan lens on a select committee, if you really want to find out what happened, if you really want to get to the truth of the matter on how we ended up today in 2018 with \$15 billion in an operational deficit, which you knew about because we had the Auditor General's report? Why wouldn't you put the public accounts committee to work? I mean, that's what it's there for. We're ready. It's like, "Put us in, Coach. We're ready to go." There would be some credibility to it. I think that the government has understated, or perhaps decided not to acknowledge, that this select committee will be viewed as a partisan theatrical event. It will be. So credibility will be called into question, and I think credibility will be called into question for a good reason.

Just think about this. Today's finance minister was then the finance critic, and he believed just like five months ago—or even three months ago—in a strong Auditor General having the independence, in the non-partisan sense, to look at the province's books. I'm going to quote the minister. Of course, he acted that he was surprised to find out the deficits were as big as they were, but we actually already knew what the numbers were. On May 7—this is just really not that long ago; in fact, I think maybe he sat here—he said, and I'm quoting from Hansard: "I'll tell you, I will always side with the Auditor General of Ontario and the Financial Accountability Officer of Ontario.... what the Auditor General and primarily what the Financial Accountability Office just told us. This is by choice." He is commenting on the pre-election report: "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, but of the \$6.7 billion the Liberals are talking about, \$3 billion is already a deficit.'"

The finance minister got up to give his inaugural speech at the Economic Club of Canada, and he basically said that this was a huge surprise, but according to Hansard, he already knew the numbers. Then they decide to establish a select committee with a very—I think people will call into question this committee, even if the committee does good work, and that's what I'm genuinely concerned about. Had the finance minister called upon the public accounts committee to follow through on our mandate—and our mandate is to review the finances of the province in an open and transparent way, where the public has access to it—I think that would have been a more credible, grounded approach to how the former Liberal government got to a \$15-billion deficit in the province of Ontario. And why wouldn't every PC member want that process to be credible and to have some weight? Because then, going forward, any policies that the government came forward with would actually have a seed of value to them. This is where we are right now in the province of Ontario.

I just want to get it on the record, though, how people are perceiving this process. This would be the third financial exercise where the government gets to point out that there are now seven members of the Liberal Party. I think some of the language that the government has been using in this respect is causing some concern for the citizens of this province, because we've seen this show before: When governments start talking about broadening ownership and modernizing and finding efficiencies, quite honestly, this usually means cuts. We've had the former Liberal government stand in this House and say that they would never sell off Hydro One. It was a matter of public record. They would never do it. But then they did. Then we had the Conservatives of the time, who were the official opposition, criticize the Liberal government for selling off Hydro One—which we did find ironic, I must say, at the time, because the Conservatives started the privatization of our hydro system—and then promise to address it. Yet now the PC government under Doug Ford has decided to double down on that same plan. There are legitimate concerns that we are experiencing on this side of the House.

I want to reference an article by John Michael McGrath, who responded to this idea that there is obviously value, there's a potentially useful exercise in reviewing how we got to this place. I think that, just based on the fact that we brought in the Financial Accountability Officer, we want that lens to be on how the money is being spent: was it efficiently, where are there potential savings and how could you redirect funding to the very priorities that we actually all share in this House, which are, I would hope, education and, of course, health care?

He says, "The powers of the Legislature certainly should not be used to carry out partisan vendettas." I reference this specific point for the members of the government because already we've seen a Premier really show his true colours, if you will, in the fact that we spent so much time and energy addressing the reduction of Toronto city council. If you go out into the city, the people of Toronto are just shaking their heads that this was never identified as a priority during the election. I have to say

that the fact that the public still has questions about the finances of the previous government—those are legitimate questions. I think where we are coming from is, put the public accounts committee to work. Address it in a very independent and non-partisan manner using the office of the auditor, to whom, as I said, the finance minister—today's finance minister, yesterday's finance critic—said he would always defer.

**1610**

The risk by establishing a select committee and, quite honestly, not actually dealing with the amendments that the New Democrats have brought in, which I think are very reasonable amendments—the first amendment is to allow any member of the committee to call witnesses. Why wouldn't you want people to come in and share their perspectives and their experiences on how finances in this province have been spent, or misspent? I don't think there's any question that there have been some funds that have been misspent. In fact, we have Auditor General reports over 15 years to prove it.

The second amendment that was brought forward by our House leader is to take a broader view and look at how new governments are dealing with deficits in today's world.

One, the point would be to learn from the mistakes of the former government in a very real and timely way. I think that this government, given the fact that this will be the third financial exercise that we are going through, even admits the Financial Accountability Officer's information that he has shared—and the Auditor General's as well.

But I want to leave you with this. These are outstanding concerns, and this is from the same article: "The committee has also been given just a few months"—really, just two months—"to investigate the last several years of government conduct; its final report is due by December 13. That's not nearly enough time to do a thorough job, if previous investigations, such as those into the Ornge and gas-plants scandals, are any indication." Once you peel back the layer, you really don't know—I believe that we have to open the black box. "Ford and the Tories have overplayed their hand, taking what could have been a useful exercise in accountability and turning it into a mere show trial. And if they aren't going to take this seriously, then why should voters?"

My proposal to the government of the day is, use the Auditor General's office. Obviously, the previous government was not respectful of that office and was not respectful of the public accounts committee, which has the same membership levels as your select committee that you're proposing as well. Use the resources that we have. It's fiscally prudent to do so, and it would actually have more credibility so that we can all accomplish the shared responsibility of ensuring that Ontario's finances get back in line.

**The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls):** Further debate?

**Mr. Bill Walker:** It's a pleasure, truly, to speak today to the Select Committee on Financial Transparency. Mr. Speaker, in my seven years here, the whole concern I've had all the way along has been about the future for our kids, like our pages here in front of us and what the future

is going to hold for them, particularly in regard to the financial realities of our great province.

I think what we've found out—and I want to commend both the Minister of Finance and the President of the Treasury Board for the fine work that they've already started to do. I'm very, very convinced that they are going to go through every single line, look at it and try to find—and that's why this select committee is so important, Mr. Speaker, to understand how the Liberals did what they did, why they did what they did, and to try to ensure that this can never happen again. I will assure you that it will not happen under the watch of a Conservative government for the next four years.

Mr. Speaker, what we're really dealing with, and why we believe this committee is so important and needed, is a system of accounting tricks and schemes that hid this spending spree from the public, from the taxpayers and from the great people of Ontario. It's deplorable, frankly, that that much money was actually utilized to build the debt, to build the deficits that we are going to pay for, which takes away—and I've said this all seven years of my election time, Mr. Speaker. Every single cent we spend on debt payments is money—dollars and cents—that doesn't go to the front lines, to things like mental health; to social housing; to seniors and long-term-care facilities, which I spent a lot of time on; to our youth and our children, particularly youth with mental health challenges; to people who need special drugs and prescriptions to help them with their health care; to people who have accessibility needs. All of those things are impacted—people on social programs and the services that they are not receiving, or at least not receiving as much as they could—because we're spending \$1 billion a month on debt payments; interest payments that are going to provide nothing at the front line.

What really concerns me, and certainly concerns me from the perspective of the Liberals who are still in this chamber and those who aren't—who didn't get elected—is that they actually knew what they were doing, and they purposely went ahead and did this. Rather than being up front about the real cost of their disastrous policy decisions—things like the Green Energy Act, the scandal of Ornge, the gas plants that were a waste of \$1 billion, all of those types of things—they knew exactly what they were doing and they still continued to try to hide it from the people of Ontario. They tried to spin the story that everything was rosy: "Just trust us and we'll keep spending."

They overspent by billions of dollars. I'm going to get into that throughout my 20 minutes, to provide some facts of what those true numbers are and what we've been able to uncover with—the select committee is going to continue to do that, but with the commission of inquiry that we've had. Certainly, again, I'm going to reference the Auditor General and the Financial Accountability Officer and some of the things they've brought to our attention.

This select committee is so important. We want to make sure that they have the ability to look into this heinous reality that we've just uncovered, Mr. Speaker. We had a sense that there were things going on, obviously. We in

opposition brought this to light long before the election and certainly through the election, but now we've got a clearer picture and we want to get an even clearer picture for the people of Ontario.

What the select committee will do is clear. They will find answers. They will find out why the previous Liberal government, under the leadership of Kathleen Wynne, and before her Dalton McGuinty, made up its own accounting rules, Mr. Speaker. We actually had the Auditor General challenge them on this. They had the ability—I don't even know what word to use—to challenge the Auditor General, whose job it is to ensure they're using proper accounting procedures, to ensure we have a way as a province to track the numbers on behalf of the people we're given the privilege to serve.

They'll find out why billions of dollars in deficits were buried in convoluted accounting schemes. They'll find out why the Liberals ignored the warnings of the Auditor General even after she called them out on their "bogus" accounting. Most importantly, the select committee will hold those responsible accountable. They will call witnesses, they'll compel documents and they'll gather evidence wherever they can.

I'd encourage everyone here to take a look at the Auditor General's pre-election report on Ontario's finances. In it, she said—Bonnie Lysyk, our Auditor General, has done a great job. She's a legislative officer of this assembly. She's a third party. She's not partisan in any way, shape or form. She's definitely there on behalf of all of the people of Ontario, and she brings an unbiased thought process to here. It's her job to report, Mr. Speaker. In it, she said, "The government is making up its own accounting rules." That should have waved alarm bells. We brought that, as opposition, to the table at that time, and they still denied it and said, "Everything is fine; you just don't like what we're doing." Well, no, we didn't like what they were doing, because at the end of the day what we're going to talk about is how much of that money they buried, how much it's going to cost us more in debt and, again, the things that aren't going to be there for people when they sadly need them most.

She used words like "conceal," "bogus," "deceptive" and "unreliable" to describe Liberal documents tabled in this Legislature. I'll say this again: What we are witnessing is without precedent in recent Canadian politics. When taken together, the conclusions of the Auditor General and the commission of inquiry are a scathing indictment of how the Liberal government broke the public's trust, lost the public's trust. That has resulted in a change of government and a significant number of seats lost for their party, Mr. Speaker.

You know as well as I do—and it saddens me to say this—Ontario is carrying \$338 billion in debt today. The current debt-to-GDP ratio is resting at an uncomfortable 39%, as updated in public accounts last week, from the Liberal government's stated 37.1% in their 2018 budget. Our interest payments on the current debt are now the fourth-largest line item in the provincial budget.

I remember, when I was critic of community and social services, Mr. Speaker, I found it deplorable at that time that we spend more on interest payments than we do in that whole ministry, that people that need us the most—on Ontario Works, on ODSP, the Ontario disability payment program—those people—we spend more money on interest payments for the debt that this government in 15 years doubled, almost tripled—

**Mrs. Robin Martin:** That's shameful.

**Mr. Bill Walker:** It is shameful; absolutely. At the end of the day, I can't believe that they kept adding to that, Mr. Speaker.

In real terms, our total operating expenditures have inflated by 55%, a spending increase of an incredible \$2,226 for every man, woman and child in our great province. Had the Liberals held expenditures to population growth, the government of Ontario would have spent \$331 billion less over the last 15 years, an amount that ironically is almost exactly the same as Ontario's total debt burden. Quebec bonds are now rated higher than Ontario's, according to Standard and Poor's.

**1620**

The importance of the select committee cannot be understated. We are not just dealing with billions of dollars of wasteful spending. The Liberals were known for making promises they couldn't afford to keep, that the taxpayers, sadly, couldn't afford to keep and are actually going to not realize a number of significant realities when they need those programs the most.

We need a clear picture. We need to ensure that this select finance committee can go in and understand exactly how this happened and what the true numbers are, because how—and I'm seeing my good friend the President of the Treasury Board coming through. He's sitting here. He's doing his work, as he always is, very diligently. But how does he actually do his job for the people of Ontario until he gets a really clear identical picture of what he needs to know? He can't start taking action. He can't begin to do the things that are needed to turn this great province around until we know those true numbers out there. I'm going to talk a little bit about that.

I want to remind the people listening at home, the great people of Ontario, that the government originally told us that they were going to have a \$600-million surplus; and yet, it turned out that it was a \$3.7-billion deficit. They originally said going into the election, with the budget, that it was going to be a \$6.7-billion deficit; in fact, just on Friday, we again found out that the true number is \$15 billion.

I want to commend again the Financial Accountability Officer and the Auditor General who had painted us a picture. They didn't believe some of those numbers were going to be accurate; they didn't feel that they were going to be able to support that with the numbers and the documents they had seen. They were thinking it might have been around a \$12-billion deficit, which was going to be horrendous in its own way.

But an additional \$3 billion have gone into the deficit. That's \$3 billion that's not building hospitals. It's not

building roads. It's not building bridges. It's not building schools. It's not going to programs like long-term care. It's not helping mental health patients. It's not helping those people who need a hand up the most on social services. It's not helping us train the next generation. It's not going into our education system. It's \$3 billion: Just think of what that could do in any of our ridings and across our great province, Mr. Speaker. That's, again, with \$1 billion being spent per month on interest payments on the debt that they have doubled over the last 15 years.

Our debt stands at \$338 billion. We talk in here all the time about our schools and what our youth need to know. I think, sadly, one of the biggest things we have to really put in place in our education system is "debt financing 101" because these young pages—I want to applaud them for being here; they're all doing great work in their first week.

*Applause.*

**Mr. Bill Walker:** It's a pleasure getting to know them and to share some time with them here. Who knows? Maybe in a few short years, they will be sitting here in these chairs and reflecting back on having to listen to people like myself. Maybe they will pick up the torch and carry it forward. But it really is about being here for that generation—and sadly, the next generation and possibly even the generation after that because of the horrendous debt levels that that Liberal government created, Mr. Speaker.

**Mr. Percy Hatfield:** The pages are all New Democrats.

**Mr. Bill Walker:** They will even be good members like the member from Windsor–Tecumseh, I think, at the end of the day.

Mr. Speaker, the other thing that I want make sure we get on record is, despite all of what I have already said, as we led towards the last election the Liberal government purposely—they knew exactly what they were doing—borrowed another \$25 billion, knowing full well, through the Auditor General's numbers and through the Financial Accountability Officer, that that was going to cost the taxpayers—the great people of Ontario—between \$43 billion and \$93 billion to pay off that \$25 billion, which they suggested through the fair hydro act was going to be given back to people in the form of a rebate. They did nothing to address the actual costs of electricity, which they've challenged through their Green Energy Act to make the highest energy rates on the continent.

At the end of the day, that money is not going to be there, as I say, for all those very valuable programs. It's not going to be going into agriculture. It's not going to be going into transportation and all of the things we hear about in here every single day from people bringing concerns from their ridings, from all political parties. They all share the challenges in our ridings of things that aren't able to be afforded because of that government's wasteful spending spree.

I want to just point out to the public that they actually had record revenues over their whole tenure, Mr. Speaker. What they weren't able, or chose not to—I won't actually say they weren't able; they could have if they would have

made the choice. They could have spent within their means. They could have kept the line, like we all have to in our own home and personal budgets, and ensured that we actually were thinking of that next generation.

**Mrs. Robin Martin:** It's called being responsible.

**Mr. Bill Walker:** It's called being responsible and accountable, especially. We are given a huge responsibility as legislators to ensure we treat that money with the respect and reverence that it deserves.

I just can't fathom that they would continue to do that. At the end of the day, what it really became over time for me here was a concern of—you want your government to be open, honest, transparent and accountable; otherwise you lose the trust and credibility of the people. And I believe that's exactly what happened in the last election. There was a significant change of government in that last election.

When you continue to see them going forward, overspending and trying to find ways to actually move money around—and I'm going to give you a very specific example, Mr. Speaker. The Liberal government actually moved \$4 billion from the government of Ontario's books onto the books of OPG. That's how they tried to suggest they were going to balance the budget: \$4 billion that's going to cost the people just in added interest payments because, technically, OPG, Ontario Power Generation, even though it's an arm of government, can't borrow at the same rate as the government of Ontario. So just by doing that one sleight of hand, moving the shell game to not allow people to understand, that's going to cost \$4 billion.

Just think, Mr. Speaker, of what \$4 billion could do in your great riding of Chatham-Kent–Leamington, where we just were at the International Plowing Match. It was a great time, and wonderful to be hosted by you and the great people in your riding—Mr. Speaker, just a little highlight there. At the end of the day, the things that we're not going to have, the things we're not going to be able to do because—and we haven't been able to do for 15 years. The people who have gone without knee surgeries or hip surgeries, the people who have gone without special medications for their children, the people who come through my door every day looking for more programs and services for their children. Especially, I always look to those less fortunate; I look to those people with special needs that are out there. That money has been spent on interest payments. It saddens me to look those parents, typically—or grandparents, brothers and sisters, cousins, whoever it happens to be—in the eye and say, "It's a shame that that Liberal government would do these types of things knowing full well that you're going without because of the decisions they made."

I, again, want to want to pay credit to both the Financial Accountability Officer and the Auditor General. They were doing their job. They were bringing these points to light. We, as the official opposition at that time, I believe, did our job of standing up and pointing these things out. The Auditor General, in particular, suggested that the government's books were actually misstated. That's a big statement for an Auditor General of a province to say.

They don't take this lightly. They go through very specific processes and protocols before they would ever do that. But Bonnie Lysyk, the Auditor General, felt with strong conviction that there were concerns of how they were doing and of the change to standard accounting principles, from what has always been here in our province's history to something they felt was more appropriate. It was more appropriate because they didn't want the public to really understand and garner exactly what was going on.

I know the words that have been used, and I'm quoting them, so I hope you'll give me that indulgence, Mr. Speaker. They're not my words; I'm not trying to be unparliamentary. But I want the people to understand, when an Auditor General uses words such as "conceal," "bogus," "deceptive," and "unreliable," that's very scary stuff at the end of the day. We need to always respect those legislative officers and ensure that we're listening to them and that all of us are focusing back on what's best for the people of Ontario.

"When taken together"—the conclusions of the Auditor General, the fiscal accountability officer and the commission of inquiry—"they 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 costs from the public." That is exactly what happened. This is unprecedented in Canadian politics.

I know, certainly on the campaign trail and in the debates, I tried to bring that reality out to the people in my great riding of Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound, because I feel the people need to understand the facts. It was a daunting thing to know, frankly, that we were going to possibly become government and inherit the nightmare that they have created over their 15-year—I'm going to call it the "reign of terror," because they truly did amass more debt in 15 years than in the rest of our provincial history. They put us in a very challenging time and circumstance. The only thing right now that's really a positive is that we have such low interest rates. Just think of what happens if they start popping up half a per cent or 1%. That's going to cost us billions of dollars more of money going to interest payments as opposed to the front lines.

I want to acknowledge the former Liberal Premier of British Columbia, Gordon Campbell, who chaired the commission that brought some of this information to light; the 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. They did a great job. He's a forensic accountant. We really appreciate their diligence, their ability to work to extremely tight timelines and the thoroughness of the report.

**1630**

Again, I can't say it enough: I am so impressed with our President of the Treasury Board and our finance minister for how much work they have already put into it. They are taking strides to get to the bottom of this as quickly as they

can. They're taking very serious actions, such as striking this Select Committee on Financial Transparency, which will do the job, will ask whatever we need to, go to whatever people we need, to really get to the truth with the whole idea of understanding how we got there so we can put safeguards in place so that it will never happen again—because we have to be here for the people. We have to stand up and make sure that everything we do is for the people.

I chose to run because I felt concerned about where our great province was going. I felt very concerned about the dollars that were being spent and wasted, as I said earlier, on things like the gas plants scandal, the Ornge scandal, the eHealth boondoggle, the billions and billions of dollars—the Green Energy Act: \$133 billion is what that program would have cost us over the 20 years for 5% at best—when I'm positive, at best—of an intermittent power source. They continually went down that road. We've gone in already and taken care of some of that. We've gotten rid of that Green Energy Act so we can't continue to be impacted by it in a negative way and add more money through more contracts. We're actually going to save the taxpayers of Ontario \$750 million.

This committee is very important, as I've said earlier. We need to ensure that we're going to get to the bottom of this. We're going to ensure that we understand how the Liberals got us into this mess. I am going to suggest again that the current official opposition were enablers. They did stand with that government many times in this House. They either voted for the budgets or they sat on their hands, which to me is no different. At the end of the day, they have to wear part of this. They have to stand there and wear part of this because they were part of it.

We have always stood up and said, "This is wrong. It's going in the wrong direction. You can't continually overspend without somebody at the end of the day"—my dear late mother always said, "You have to take care of your dollars and you have to think down the road because you really have to pay and be accountable for what you're going to do." Every decision we make is an accountability of ourselves. We have to ensure that when we make those decisions, we know what the repercussions could be. Hopefully, everybody in this House makes decisions based on what's best for all of the people we're given the privilege and the opportunity to represent.

I want to ensure, going forward, that we are able to turn this great province around and that we're able to provide the best hospitals, the best schools, the best long-term-care facilities, the best mental health services and the best social and community services programs that we have out there, particularly for the less fortunate and for people with special needs. We all come with compassion on this side of the House, as they do on the other side of the House, to ensure that those people have programs and services.

The only way we can do that is to live within our means, to get back to balanced budgets and ensure that every single dollar is treated as an investment. "What is it going to do for the benefit of all Ontarians?" as opposed to, "I'm just going to make political promises and spend beyond

my means,” like the Liberals did, and put us into a \$338-billion sinkhole.

**The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls):** Further debate?

**Ms. Jennifer K. French:** I am glad to also have the opportunity to rise in this fine Legislature and add what I hope are thoughtful comments on this debate. We have before us a motion and a very thoughtful amendment to the motion that we’re going to be discussing about select committees.

I have appreciated being in the House listening to the debate, but also when I’ve been in my office and having the TV on while I’ve been doing work and following what’s happening in the debate, it has been very interesting to have conversations about select committees, what they are at all and what they have been historically created to address. I think that it’s important, actually, for all of the new members—myself included. I realize I’m not a brand spanking new member. I still have a lot to learn about the work that this Legislature can accomplish, especially when it is an area of focus for a select committee that is meant to be a non-partisan, task-focused committee.

I’ll take you back a little bit in time. We’ve had a few select committee reports in the last stretch, for example, on mental health and addictions, back in 2010. That was a select committee, and their final report was called *Navigating the Journey to Wellness: The Comprehensive Mental Health and Addictions Action Plan for Ontarians*.

Interestingly, though, when I did a search through the online document, the word “addictions” comes up 170 times, the word “opioid” comes up zero, the word “analgesic” comes up zero and the word “fentanyl” comes up zero. So perhaps it’s time for another select committee looking at mental health and addictions. There are opportunities for us as a Legislature to do some learning.

There is a Select Committee on Alternative Fuel Sources. I was just discussing this with the Clerks’ table. They met for 10 months. I couldn’t get my hands on the report just because it was an older one, but again the work had been done with all of the stakeholders across the province. I was reading some of that. And the folks who were a part of that select committee were from all parties. It wasn’t a partisan committee. It, of course, had local concerns, with some of the different energy sources, and lots of debate and discussion, but it was 10 months of research and learning to try and put together something that would inform policy in this Legislature.

This is some of the important work that is supposed to happen in this building as part of this Legislature.

We recently had the Select Committee on Sexual Violence and Harassment. It was in December 2015 that that report came out. Being a young woman—youngish; not as young as I used to be, Speaker, but still a youngish woman—in this Legislature, I waited for that report to inform what this House would do, and that took a little bit of time. It found its way through; we now have an updated code of conduct. We didn’t have that, shockingly; we didn’t have an updated code of conduct. We do now, and that is a result of that non-partisan work that was supposed

to be in the best interests of Ontarians and certainly of these members.

I’m taking us down this path because I appreciate seeing the work that goes on behind the scenes. People tune in and they see question period and they see the theatre and they see the sometimes combative nature of this place, but they don’t necessarily know that there are opportunities to make this place better.

Here we have the government putting forward this motion to create a select committee. I just spoke glowingly about select committees. If we want to create a select committee that is going to get to the heart of something, that is going to dig and delve and hopefully accomplish something, I want to talk about the reasons for it. I want to talk about what it could look like, so that it is the best version of what it could be.

This Select Committee on Financial Transparency—I’ll read the original motion:

“... 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”—I’m putting an asterisk there; I’ll come back to you, Speaker—“or any other aspect of the report that the committee deems relevant; and

“That the committee”—I’m putting another asterisk there, and I’ll come back to that—“have the power to send for persons, papers and things....”

It goes on. It tells about when it meets and where and all of that sort of thing.

Why I’m putting these asterisks: the objectives of “the previous government.” It is limited in scope to the previous government. Everyone in Ontario has an interest in what happened that led up to the election and how we find ourselves here. Everybody does want a peek behind the curtain, so to speak. We’ve had a lot of that work done responsibly and professionally by the Auditor General, an independent officer of the Legislature. We have thousands of pages of insight that we could draw from. But there’s an interest in this select committee, absolutely, in the broader community. They want to know what led us to this point.

But there is also not just an interest; I feel there is a responsibility of this House and of this proposed select committee to also look at the accounting practices, the decision-making in general, of this government as well in going forward.

**1640**

Since we’ve been here, this government has brought forward a handful of bills that have been debated, that have been passed or that are going through the process, none of which have gone to committee. None of them have had committee. Our private members’ bills have been referred to committee, but none of them have made it to there. These bills, like repealing the Green Energy Act or the cancellation of windmills, didn’t actually go to committee.

There wasn't the input from the broader communities. Certainly, if we talk about Bill 5, which was addressing the size of the Toronto city council, there wasn't committee for that.

The only committee that we're actually seeing is a select committee which is just focused on the last government but not focused on this current government. We've already had how many—maybe the Clerks can tell me. I think this is the 28th sessional day. Is that correct, give or take?

**Mr. Gilles Bisson:** Close to it, yes.

**Ms. Jennifer K. French:** But who's counting, right?

**Mr. Gilles Bisson:** They do, actually.

**Ms. Jennifer K. French:** They count. Some of us might as well. But it's the 28th sessional day. In those 28 sessional days that we have been here, the government has managed to pass and bring forward these bills. So there is something that this select committee could look at if we expand the scope. Don't they want that insight to make sure they're not accidentally doing some of the same things that the last government did? Because the people of Ontario, I'm sure, would appreciate that reassurance.

That is why in one of our amendments, in the second paragraph, we insert the words "and the current government to date." I'm going to reread it where, Speaker, you'll remember I put a little asterisk there. I'm coming back to that.

We want it to be, "That the committee investigate and report on the accounting practices, decision-making and policy objectives of the previous government and the current government to date or any other aspect of the report that the committee deems relevant." That's one part of it.

The other asterisk that I had mentioned was where it says, "That the committee have the power to send for persons, papers and things." We want it to say, "and each member of the committee shall be authorized to independently call witnesses before the committee."

This sounds like I'm getting technical and inside baseball. But, Speaker, this is not your first rodeo. You've been to committee; you've seen a couple of things. I would like to—

*Interjection.*

**Ms. Jennifer K. French:** I would like the member from Timmins to not necessarily act out rodeo for me while I'm giving a speech, but thanks for that.

When we sit at committee—or in my experience, because I have only ever served in this House sitting across from a majority government, which also means that when I've served on committee, I have sat across from majority committee situations. Everybody understands the concept of a majority, that if you take a vote, the majority wins, or can win if they're all voting together.

Our concern with the text of the motion and why we are wanting to change it is that if the committee has the power to send for persons, papers and things, that's to call for witnesses. That's to say, "We want to hear from this group," or this individual, this professional, this accounting firm, this whomever. And the committee has the right

to invite them, as it should. The committee absolutely should be able to call whomever it wants.

The key here is, we want it to say, "and each member of the committee ..." because if I am sitting on this select committee and I say, "Do you know what? We believe that this particular individual," this independent source or this auditor or this accountant or whomever we deem appropriate—as an independent member of that committee, as I'm hearing testimony, if I want to invite someone in, the committee can actually vote to overrule me. I'm not suggesting that a government majority committee would ever overrule a suggestion for a witness from the opposition, but we want the words to say "or an independent member on that committee should also be able to invite"—right? It shouldn't just be that the committee as a whole has that power to ultimately override, potentially.

That explains our two amendments and how we want to flesh out this motion so that the select committee has a broader scope and so that all members on that committee—so that it isn't a partisan endeavour—have the right to call witnesses, and that it can't just be the government majority on that committee who can determine who we hear from or who we learn from.

I'm going to say that the goal of this committee should be clear. The rhetoric that we have heard makes a lot clear. The folks from the government benches who have been talking about this will talk at length about scandal and about waste, and they have read the Auditor General's remarks—all of that is fair. Certainly, anything that the Auditor General has shared as she has been auditing and reviewing—we respect her professional opinion, and we invite it and welcome it. But what's interesting, again, is that the government won't expand the scope to make sure that they could also be considered by this.

I wonder what the goal of the committee is, ultimately, because yesterday the government House leader, when he was introducing the motion, speaking to the motion and explaining the motion, had this to say: "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." That's a pretty significant statement. If we are heading into a select committee, saying that what we are—not even intending to find, but the potential to find someone in contempt. This says, "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 wonder if the goal of this committee is ultimately to find the former Premier or specific folks in contempt, because if that happens, Speaker—and you can correct me if I'm wrong—I guess the endgame, then, or the outcome, would be removal. I'm learning the system as we go.

I think a select committee should be a fact-finding mission. I think a select committee should be a learning opportunity. It is going to be interesting to watch and see if there's anything else to it, in terms of the goals of the committee.

What we have seen, certainly—and the Liberals can tell their own story, broadly, in the province and in the country. We are in a democratic system, with the party system. We all—we just saw it in the last election—have to present our vision and do our best to make sure that the broader community understands what we stand for. But it's very interesting, in this House we keep seeing over and over that the government benches bring a lot of federal pieces in here. I think we're seeing the lead-up to the federal election and making sure—they're drawing a lot of attention to the Liberal brand. I wonder if that's a part of the select committee. So it will be interesting to watch. I hope that we get something useful out of it.

I hope the government does decide to add in our amendments, because by not adding them in, they're going against what they have been saying over and over. The whip from the other side is wondering what I'm talking about, the "over and over." Well, to their credit, what they have been saying over and over of late is, "Why can't we all work together? Let's all work together." Would that we could. A committee, especially a select committee, should be a non-partisan venture. They're not going to let us have balanced numbers on the committee, but perhaps they would consider this amendment that gives all individual members the ability to call witnesses so that the committee can't just decide—but working together.

**1650**

I was a little bit late for my House duty this afternoon, and I'll tell you why: I had a really special opportunity. Speaker, you understand this, because you also serve as Deputy Speaker and a presiding officer of this Legislature. I had the opportunity to join a Speakers' round table, as did a member from each of the parties in this Legislature, to meet with the delegation from the Council of State Governments. It was some of our American counterparts, senators and some representatives who were here to learn about culture and tourism, education and economic and trade opportunities. That meeting was scheduled from 2 until 3, because at 3 o'clock we were supposed to have our afternoon session begin. So in the spirit of working together, yesterday afternoon one of the members from the government side—surprise—tabled a motion or whatever it was that allowed us to sit at 2 instead of 3, bumped it up and made it earlier by an hour.

Many of us in this room have things going on—stakeholder relations and meetings and, in this case, a special visiting American delegation—and they almost derailed me. I almost didn't get to speak and do my 20, but lucky for them, I made it. But changing the schedule by an hour the afternoon before just because is not in the spirit of working together. While I'm sure it's fun for them to watch us scramble—we've been doing okay; we managed—I don't think it's doing any favours for their own members. That's for them to sort out.

But working together? Then let us call witnesses. Don't retain that power of veto and that "I'm bigger and stronger than you, and you're not allowed to call a witness." Because if this select committee is limiting itself to only the

witnesses that the majority and, in this case, the government approves, what does that say about the goal of this committee? If the foregone conclusion of this, if the outcome of this is already predetermined—and again, I'm going to read what the government House leader had said about this select committee and his rationale for it: "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."

If the goal of this committee is just a witch hunt, to make sure that we hold someone in contempt at the end of it, let's learn from the Auditor General's stuff and respect her work going forward, but let's also give this committee a chance to learn not just about the last government—and I'm with you. I would like to know the behind-the-scenes pieces so that we can all learn from it, because on this side of four years, we're going to have another government. It's anyone's guess what that will look like. But what if we actually did something in a select committee that we could all learn from, that could improve our accountability, that could improve our processes?

So let's not just limit ourselves to the previous government, but let's add "and the current government to date," because we've seen the Green Energy Act repealed. We've seen the cancellation of windmills, Bill 5. There are things to delve into. There are questions to ask; there are questions to answer. You've seen question period. It isn't answer period. So if we can't get those answers here, perhaps we can get them there.

It is amazing how 20 minutes can fly by. I would love to talk about—that I think the goal of this committee is really to find reasons to cut our health care and education. But I will save that for another time, because I think that is part of the goal.

**The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls):** Pursuant to standing order 47(c), I am now required to interrupt the proceedings and announce that there has been more than six and a half hours of debate on the motion. This debate will therefore be deemed adjourned unless the government House leader specifies otherwise.

I recognize the President of the Treasury Board.

**Hon. Peter Bethlenfalvy:** No further debate, Mr. Speaker.

*Debate deemed adjourned.*

**The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls):** Orders of the day.

**Hon. Peter Bethlenfalvy:** I move adjournment of the House, Mr. Speaker.

**The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls):** Is it the pleasure of the House that we adjourn? I heard a no.

All those in favour will please say "aye."

All those opposed will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

**Mr. Gilles Bisson:** On division.

**The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls):** Carried on division.

This House now stands adjourned until 9 o'clock tomorrow morning.

*The House adjourned at 1655.*

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<b>French, Jennifer K. (NDP)</b>	Oshawa	Third Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Troisième vice-présidente du comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative

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Gill, Parm (PC)	Milton	
Glover, Chris (NDP)	Spadina—Fort York	
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Harris, Mike (PC)	Kitchener—Conestoga	
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Kramp, Daryl (PC)	Hastings—Lennox and Addington	
Kusendova, Natalia (PC)	Mississauga Centre / Mississauga- Centre	
Lalonde, Marie-France (LIB)	Orléans	
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Mantha, Michael (NDP)	Algoma—Manitoulin	
Martin, Robin (PC)	Eglinton—Lawrence	
Martow, Gila (PC)	Thornhill	
McDonell, Jim (PC)	Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry	
McKenna, Jane (PC)	Burlington	
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Miller, Norman (PC)	Parry Sound—Muskoka	
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	
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Natyshak, Taras (NDP)	Essex	

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Park, Lindsey (PC)	Durham	
Parsa, Michael (PC)	Aurora—Oak Ridges—Richmond Hill	
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Piccini, David (PC)	Northumberland—Peterborough South / Northumberland—Peterborough-Sud	
Rakocevic, Tom (NDP)	Humber River—Black Creek	
Rasheed, Kaleed (PC)	Mississauga East—Cooksville / Mississauga-Est—Cooksville	
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Romano, Ross (PC)	Sault Ste. Marie	
Sabawy, Sheref (PC)	Mississauga—Erin Mills	
Sandhu, Amarjot (PC)	Brampton West / Brampton-Ouest	
Sarkaria, Prabmeet Singh (PC)	Brampton South / Brampton-Sud	
Sattler, Peggy (NDP)	London West / London-Ouest	
Schreiner, Mike (GRN)	Guelph	
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Shaw, Sandy (NDP)	Hamilton West—Ancaster—Dundas / Hamilton-Ouest—Ancaster—Dundas	
Simard, Amanda (PC)	Glengarry—Prescott—Russell	
Singh, Gurattan (NDP)	Brampton East / Brampton-Est	
Singh, Sara (NDP)	Brampton Centre / Brampton-Centre	Deputy Leader, Official Opposition / Chef adjointe de l'opposition officielle
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Smith, Dave (PC)	Peterborough—Kawartha	
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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	
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West, Jamie (NDP)	Sudbury	
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<b>Yakabuski, Hon. / L'hon. John (PC)</b>	Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke	Minister of Transportation / Ministre des Transports
Yarde, Kevin (NDP)	Brampton North / Brampton-Nord	
<b>Yurek, Hon. / L'hon. Jeff (PC)</b>	Elgin—Middlesex—London	Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry / Ministre des Richesses naturelles et des Forêts

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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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Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Aris Babikian  
Roman Baber, Aris Babikian  
Nathalie Des Rosiers, Jill Dunlop  
Parm Gill, Lindsey Park  
Ross Romano, Prabmeet Singh Sarkaria  
Sara Singh, Monique Taylor  
Kevin Yarde  
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Jocelyn McCauley

**Standing Committee on the Legislative Assembly / Comité permanent de l'Assemblée législative**

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Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Vijay Thanigasalam  
Robert Bailey, Rima Berns-McGown  
Michael Coteau, Mike Harris  
Faisal Hassan, Jane McKenna  
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Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Peggy Sattler  
Catherine Fife, Goldie Ghamari  
Jim McDonell, Norman Miller  
Suze Morrison, Michael Parsa  
Peggy Sattler, Kinga Surma  
Daisy Wai  
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Christopher Tyrell

**Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills / Comité permanent des règlements et des projets de loi d'intérêt privé**

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Toby Barrett, Will Bouma  
Mike Harris, Randy Hillier  
Mitzie Hunter, Laura Mae Lindo  
Paul Miller, Billy Pang  
Kaleed Rasheed, Amarjot Sandhu  
Jamie West  
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Eric Rennie

**Standing Committee on Social Policy / Comité permanent de la politique sociale**

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Deepak Anand, Doly Begum  
Jeff Burch, Amy Fee  
Michael Gravelle, Joel Harden  
Belinda Karahalios, Robin Martin  
Sheref Sabawy, Nina Tangri  
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