

Legislative
Assembly
of Ontario



Assemblée
législative
de l'Ontario

**Official Report
of Debates
(Hansard)**

No. 15

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

N° 15

3rd Session
41st Parliament

Wednesday
18 April 2018

3^e session
41^e législature

Mercredi
18 avril 2018

Speaker: Honourable Dave Levac
Clerk: Todd Decker

Président : L'honorable Dave Levac
Greffier : Todd Decker

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Room 500, West Wing, Legislative Building
111 Wellesley Street West, Queen's Park
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
Salle 500, aile ouest, Édifice du Parlement
111, rue Wellesley ouest, Queen's Park
Toronto ON M7A 1A2
Téléphone, 416-325-7400; télécopieur, 416-325-7430
Publié par l'Assemblée législative de l'Ontario

ISSN 1180-2987

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
OF ONTARIO

Wednesday 18 April 2018

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE
DE L'ONTARIO

Mercredi 18 avril 2018

The House met at 0900.

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

Prayers.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

PLAN FOR CARE
AND OPPORTUNITY ACT
(BUDGET MEASURES), 2018
LOI DE 2018 POUR UN PLAN AXÉ
SUR LE MIEUX-ÊTRE ET L'AVENIR
(MESURES BUDGÉTAIRES)

Resuming the debate adjourned on April 17, 2018, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 31, An Act to implement Budget measures and to enact and amend various statutes / Projet de loi 31, Loi visant à mettre en oeuvre les mesures budgétaires et à édicter et à modifier diverses lois.

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

Hon. Glenn Thibeault: I'm very pleased to be able to rise and be part of the discussion and the narrative that we've been bringing forward when it talks about our budget. What we have here is A Plan for Care and Opportunity.

I'm very pleased to see many things within this budget. The one that I want to talk about briefly is introducing the new Seniors' Healthy Home Program. Mr. Speaker, this program recognizes the costs associated with older seniors living at home, where they want to be. It provides a benefit of up to \$750 annually for eligible households led by seniors 75 and over, to help them live independently and offset the costs of maintaining their homes.

Why this one is important to me, Mr. Speaker, is, a few years, I lost my father; he passed away. He was 101 years old.

Applause.

Hon. Glenn Thibeault: Yes. It makes me very proud, Mr. Speaker, because of the longevity. He was 56 when I was born, and my mother was in her late forties; I'm not going to say how old she was, but she passed away in 2009. I had senior parents. I know my father and mother used to get bugged by their friends all the time that they were the only people they knew who were getting Old Age Security and the baby bonus at the same time.

But one of the things, in this life, that we lead—all of us in this House—is we lead very active lives and very busy lives when we're at home. Like many families, I was

always in that difficult position of having to look after my family—make sure that I'm shovelling my driveway; I'm cutting my lawn; I'm looking after my family—and then call my dad and say, “Dad, you're in your nineties. I'll get there. I'll shovel your driveway. Don't worry about it.” By the time I got there, it was already done, because you know what most parents will say to you? “I don't have the time to wait around for you.” They do those things.

I know many of us here actually have families that come to us in our constituencies and say, “What are we going to do to help our seniors stay at home?” That's why, Mr. Speaker, I am so proud to see, and I'm so happy to see, this up to \$750 annually to help seniors stay in their homes. I know we can debate the merits of our budget and the merits of our bill, but ultimately, this part of our bill, this part of our budget, I know will help many, many families, help seniors stay in their homes. That's one of the things that I'm very proud to see in this budget.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'll end it at that.

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

Mr. John Yakabuski: I appreciate the comments from the minister. I don't know if he had just started debate this morning, but if he just started, he didn't go very long. It kind of took us by surprise.

It was an interesting story about his father. My grandfather was 52 when he got married—for the first time—so there is some similarity in that regard. Obviously, they had children, or I wouldn't be here as well. Some people would argue that might have been a good thing, but that's a debate for another day.

He speaks about one item in the budget, the \$750. We've got a growing senior population. I don't know the details exactly, whether all seniors are eligible for that or not, but a senior living in a 10,000-square-foot mansion probably doesn't need the \$750 from the government or anywhere else, and probably we could be spending that money better on the seniors who do need the help. I don't know if there's a partition in that way at all, but it is part and parcel of what has been done in this budget, and that is, quite frankly, an attempt to put something in there for everybody for the purpose of influencing them to vote Liberal in the next election.

This budget is not a budget; it's a campaign document. The Premier herself said, “It's the campaign document we're running on.” Interestingly enough, they call it a budget, but when it suits the Premier's purposes, she says, “No, that's essentially our platform. We're running on the budget.”

They need to get their stories straight. They need to actually separate—they say they've got their platform for their campaign out; well, do they or do they not? Is the budget what they're running on? Because if it is, that's what they should make abundantly clear.

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

Mr. Taras Natyshak: I'm pleased to listen to the comments from the member from Sudbury. Kudos to you for having longevity in your genes. I wish you a long, healthy, and prosperous life shovelling your driveway for the remainder of your time on this earth.

My parents are getting up there as well. Fortunately, they both had the good fortune of working in unionized jobs that afford them benefits. My dad is a type one diabetic and has had coverage for diabetes—although he doesn't have coverage now for a continuous glucose monitor, which, I believe, is a failure on the part of this government to not cover it. My point is, they are the lucky ones, and nowadays they are few and far between. There are seniors' populations that were not so fortunate and are getting into their retirement years without the benefit of post-retirement benefits and a good pension.

Interestingly enough, in this budget, buried in schedule 14 at the back of the budget—and I would appreciate a comment from the member from Sudbury: Tell us why your government decided to arbitrarily use the heavy hand of legislation to strip bargaining rights from one union and deliver them to another? It's unprecedented, giving bargaining rights that were collectively bargained over 40 years ago through the building trades in the cement formwork sector, in the ICI sector, providing good labour demand and supply—stripping that and creating chaos in that industry. What was the problem you were trying to solve there? How do you justify doing that? You're going to have a charter challenge on your hands. It's unprecedented to see this government actually take those steps. I'd like to hear the justification on the part of any member of the government.

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

Mr. Yvan Baker: It's great to hear about the longevity in the lives of the families of the members of this Legislature. The member from Renfrew talked about his dad getting married at 52. At the rate I'm going, I'm going to beat that.

I just wanted to share that I think this is—the member from Sudbury had some very thoughtful remarks. I think there's a lot in this budget that speaks to the needs of people today and the needs of people in the future. The member from Sudbury alluded to that in talking about the context in his family and the needs of seniors. I'm proud of that budget for this reason.

0910

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

Mr. Bill Walker: It's a pleasure to speak and interesting, again, with the Minister of Energy. It's interesting,

in this House, that they keep coming out with more and more programs. If they gave seniors a break on their hydro rates, they wouldn't have to hand them out a cheque that's actually their money coming back to them.

So, yes, I applaud it. Yes, there are certainly many seniors out there. Again, a great story about his dad; we all want to have those types of opportunities with our parents to live that long. But at the end of the day, they are making it harder on a lot of those seniors. What we really want to see are less taxes. We want to see less costs.

They've raised hydro, which they never will admit in this House. They always come out and say they're giving a 25% reduction, but they don't ever admit that they were responsible for that going up 300%. Those seniors have less money in their pockets. For our hunters and fishermen, their licences have gone up. Again, money does not go back to the special-purpose account, and those go up. Our drivers' licences go up. Seniors, again, are paying there. The taxes on the actual commodities that they are buying are going up. The taxes are going to go up and the cost of food is going to go up because of some of the initiatives of this government.

He stands in this House continually and says, "We're going to give more programs. We're going to add more programs." When are they going to address the problem and actually limit the rates going up? It's not about giving more money to more people. It's their money. It's coming from taxes. It's not just coming from a tree. Yes, it's wonderful that those people are going to have some funds, but at the end of the day, can we address the real issues? Can we actually limit the costs going up?

If he'll be honest in this House, he will tell us that in two years, those hydro rates are going to continue to start going back up. So that—

Interjection.

Mr. Bill Walker: It is true. You know it's true. Your government has said it's true. The Auditor General has said it's true. I know you don't believe the Auditor General. I think the people of Ontario will take their word for it. Nothing against you personally, but I think from your government, they'll take the Auditor General's version.

We want to see the prices going down, taxes not going up—not more handouts.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The Minister of Energy has two minutes.

Hon. Glenn Thibeault: First off, I want to thank the members from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke, from Essex, from Etobicoke Centre and from Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound. Maybe I'll start and work my way backwards.

Congratulations to the member from Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound on his Owen Sound Platers going against the—

Mr. John Yakabuski: The Attack.

Hon. Glenn Thibeault: The Attack, yes. The Platers are the old team. That's when the Wolves were actually green and yellow, not blue and white. But the Attack going seven games against the Soo Greyhounds: great hockey, and the OHL is always bringing us that.

The second thing, though, as it relates to many of his comments on electricity prices: We as a government do acknowledge that prices went up. Prices went up because we spent \$70 billion investing in a system that they left, when they were in power, in tatters. That \$70 billion did cost more, and we made sure that we actually shut down coal, eliminated coal, which helped our overall health care system.

That's why we brought forward the fair hydro plan. I know they didn't like that plan. I know they don't like bringing forward 25% off for seniors, for all families. And there's more in place to help those seniors, which is the Ontario Electricity Support Program. They don't talk about the programs that we're doing because of the investments that we've made to actually help those families and those seniors.

Again, I want to thank my colleague for speaking out and talking about many of the important pieces of our budget. I know the member from Essex was talking to me about longevity and family, shovelling the driveway and some of the concerns that he has about the union piece that's in there in schedule 14. I understand that.

I know I'm running out of time and I can't even get to my colleague from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke, but I do have to say, you know—

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

Hon. Glenn Thibeault: It's 52—

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

Hon. Glenn Thibeault: Make sure we keep that—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Thank you for the third time.

Pursuant to standing order 47(c), I'm now required to interrupt the proceedings and announce that there has been more than six and one-half hours of debate on the motion for second reading of this bill. This debate will therefore be deemed adjourned unless the government House leader specifies otherwise.

The Minister of Government and Consumer Services.

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: No further debate, Mr. Speaker.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Orders of the day.

TIME ALLOCATION

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: I move that, pursuant to standing order 47 and notwithstanding any other standing order or special order of the House relating to Bill 8, An Act to amend the Consumer Reporting Act and the Technical Standards and Safety Act, 2000, when the bill is next called as a government order, the Speaker shall put every question necessary to dispose of the second reading stage of the bill without further debate or amendment and at such time the bill shall be ordered referred to the Standing Committee on General Government; and

That the Standing Committee on General Government be authorized to meet on Wednesday, April 25, 2018, from 1:30 p.m. to 6 p.m. for the purpose of public hearings on the bill; and

That the Clerk of the Committee, in consultation with the committee Chair, be authorized to arrange the notice of public hearings; and

That the deadline for requests to appear be 4 p.m. on Tuesday, April 24, 2018; and

That witnesses be scheduled on a first-come, first-served basis; and

That the Clerk of the Committee distribute a draft copy of the agenda to the committee members and their designates by Monday, April 23, 2018, at 5 p.m.; and

That each witness will receive up to five minutes for their presentation followed by nine minutes for questions from committee members divided equally among the recognized parties; and

That the deadline for written submissions be 6 p.m. on Wednesday, April 25, 2018; and

That the deadline for filing amendments to the bill with the Clerk of the Committee shall be 12 p.m. on Thursday, April 26, 2018; and

That the committee be authorized to meet on Monday, April 30, 2018, from 2 p.m. to 6 p.m. for the purpose of clause-by-clause consideration of the bill; and

On April 30, 2018, at 4 p.m., those amendments which have not yet been moved shall be deemed to have been moved, and the Chair of the committee shall interrupt the proceedings and shall, without further debate or amendment, put every question necessary to dispose of all remaining sections of the bill and any amendments thereto. At this time, the Chair shall allow one 20-minute waiting period pursuant to standing order 129(a); and

That the committee shall report the bill to the House no later than Tuesday, May 1, 2018. In the event that the committee fails to report the bill on that day, the bill shall be deemed to be passed by the committee and shall be deemed to be reported to and received by the House; and

That, upon receiving the report of the Standing Committee on General Government, the Speaker shall put the question for adoption of the report immediately, and at such time the bill shall be ordered for third reading, which order may be called that same day; and

That, notwithstanding standing order 81(c), the bill may be called more than once in the same sessional day; and

That, when the order for third reading of the bill is called, two hours of debate shall be allotted to the third reading stage of the bill, apportioned equally among the recognized parties; and

That during this time, there shall be no motion for either adjournment of the debate or adjournment of the House permitted. At the end of this time, the Speaker shall interrupt the proceedings and shall put every question necessary to dispose of this stage of the bill without further debate or amendment; and

The votes on second and third reading may be deferred pursuant to standing order 28(h); and

That, in the case of any division relating to any proceedings on the bill, the division bell shall be limited to five minutes.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Minister MacCharles has moved government motion number 6.

Minister MacCharles?

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: I'd first like to address a couple of comments made over the course of debate of this bill. Yesterday, I understand the member for Dufferin–Caledon said, “I hope that we are not bringing Bill 8 forward and rushing it because we want to have a check mark or a give-me to a retiring member of the Legislature.” Speaker, I was surprised and I was appalled to hear that statement. Not only is this bordering on unparliamentary, it's reprehensible to be politicizing public safety.

0920

Let me make this abundantly clear to the member: In my actions and my work as minister, I've always been, and will continue to be, dedicated to the protection of Ontarians. Maybe when the Conservatives put forward ideas, they do it with no regard for the public good, but that is not how we do things on this side of the House, in this government.

When my ministry passes changes to protect those using payday lending and help end the vicious cycle of debt, I am not asking for a give-me. When we make changes to help protect those buying new homes, undertaking travel services, buying condominiums, buying tickets for events, I am not asking for a give-me. So, Speaker, when I propose changes that would protect vulnerable populations and develop elevator availability standards, I am certainly not asking for a give-me. I'm dedicated to consumer protection in Ontario, and on that, my record speaks for itself.

I also want to address something that the member from Huron–Bruce said. She referred to the TSSA, the Technical Standards and Safety Authority, as a “perfect example of burdensome red tape....” Speaker, putting aside the fact that the TSSA was created by her party, which members know full well, I am disheartened to hear again the Conservatives politicizing public safety and decrying protecting Ontarians as “red tape.” It's not burdensome red tape when we make sure that the amusement rides our children ride are safe. It's not burdensome red tape when we ensure that propane tanks and fuels are stored properly. I want to make this abundantly clear to members of the opposition: Public safety is not red tape.

I would now like to move to the importance of this legislation and why we need to pass it now. Consumer credit reporting is one of the largest areas of complaints that my ministry receives. These complaints are often very time-sensitive. Giving consumers timely access to credit ensures they have the best possible opportunity to correct the record and have accurate information. It also means that identity fraud can be detected and eliminated before it becomes a problem, not months after. And it helps consumers, Speaker, proceed with important purchases, like buying a new home or securing a loan.

Elevator availability hurts the members of our society who most need our help—when those elevators are not

there for them. When the Premier talks about a caring government, this is exactly the kind of thing she's talking about. Speaker, I would like to draw your attention to the fact that there is no data on the widespread nature of elevator availability. We know that from an extensive report that we commissioned from a third party.

Speaker, everyone in this House knows we can't take action to introduce either legislation or regulations until we have the information we need, and it's this legislation before us that will accomplish that. It will enable us to take action, starting tomorrow, but for that to happen, this legislation needs to be passed today.

Speaker, I would also like to briefly correct the record on a few things I have been hearing over the last few days during the debate, particularly on the elevator availability piece. This legislation establishes a framework for elevator availability standards. There currently is no data about the availability of elevators. The legislation would first enable the Technical Standards and Safety Authority to collect this important information. It would then enable government to use it to determine what is an appropriate timeline for a repair, and that would be done, of course, through regulations. Finally, it would give either the Technical Standards and Safety Authority, or an appropriate regulator, the authority to issue AMPs—AMPs are administrative monetary penalties—for non-compliance with the regulations, after they have been developed, of course.

Speaker, I know you and most members of this Legislature understand the importance of protecting Ontario consumers against things like identity fraud and ensuring they have timely access to elevators. This is why we are enacting time allocation to ensure that Ontarians do not have to wait even longer to have action on these very important files.

I look forward to debating this legislation further in the coming days.

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

Mr. Bill Walker: I'd like to just start off my talk this morning by sharing a thought. Someone I have great admiration for in this House, the member from St. Catharines, the chief government whip—he's been here for a long time. He always shares with me when we have sidebar conversations that he understands and respects that the job of the opposition is to challenge the government and to hold them accountable. Often when I bring up points in this House, I'll get heckling saying I'm negative and I'm only talking about the bad things. Well, sadly, there are a lot of those things to talk about, and the reality is I need to put them on the record to hold this government to account.

This is very interesting: The Minister of Energy, who stood up for a couple of minutes and talked about a program for seniors—let's not forget it's the taxpayer who is giving that money, not the Liberals as nice people writing cheques; that's the people of Ontario's money he's giving back—didn't even finish the 20 minutes at the end of the day. On something as important as the budget, the

document that they keep saying, when they brought out that fluffy document they did, that really is a campaign platform—they're not even going to stand here and talk about it for the full amount of time they can. They're actually going to time-allocate the budget.

How do you tell the people of Ontario, when you have tripled the debt in your 15 years and they are spending billions of dollars in interest—

Mr. Arthur Potts: Point of order.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Point of order, the member from Beaches–East York.

Mr. Arthur Potts: I think the member knows that we just finished the debate on the budget and we're on the elevator time allocation now. Let's have a conversation about elevators.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): I respect your comment. I'm sure the member will stay within the guidelines that are set out.

Mr. Bill Walker: Mr. Speaker, I believe he might have been stuck in an elevator, because we've moved on from that bill and we're actually talking about time allocation of the budget that your party introduced.

Mr. Rick Nicholls: The elevator doesn't go to the top floor.

Mr. Bill Walker: I was going to say that, but I won't.

Again, it's something as important and fundamental to government, to the people and to democracy as the budget, and they're actually time-allocating it. Is that because they don't want the official opposition and, probably I would hope, the third party standing here and challenging them on their election document that they're calling the budget?

Mr. Speaker, I find it deplorable that a government—let's just ask the people at home who are watching. Do you know what the top three expenditures of this provincial government are? Health care, which it appropriately should be; education, as it appropriately should be; and the third is debt interest. They have accumulated so much debt—and by the way, after promising last year that they were going to balance the budget—which they didn't, because they actually moved \$4 billion onto OPG's books. That's still a debt of the people of Ontario; all you did was move the shells around. But there wasn't a net, true balanced budget. There's \$4 billion there. They said, "For the foreseeable future, we're going to have balanced budgets." This year they came out and said, "Oh, sorry. We're going to have to run a deficit this year"—\$6.7 billion—"and we're going to do it for the next number of years."

Again, they made a promise to the people of Ontario and they broke that promise. Today, they are time-allocating that budget debate. They don't want us to talk about things like spending a billion dollars of interest every single month. Let's not forget this is at historically low interest rates. What happens when those start to incrementally come up? And they will. As we all know, debt is low, but it will at some point come up, and then there are more dollars. They're not doing things like mental health. You're not giving it to community and

social services. You're not giving it to those seniors, those long-term-care people.

I'm the critic for long-term care. There are 34,000 seniors on a wait-list, waiting for a long-term-care bed. Just on that little side note, for three budgets, they never had a cent in for new beds. Ironically, they came out and pledged 5,000 new beds this year—interesting. Just before an election, "Oh, now it's a big issue. We have to build some beds."

Who trusts the government? They said that they were going to redevelop 30,000 beds and, if I'm kind, they have done—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): I've just been informed—and I have to share this with you—that we're actually talking about government motion 6. It's time allocation, but you have to stay within those guidelines. You were going on to the budget. Even though it's time-allocated, that doesn't matter, I've been informed. If you could get to that area on Bill 8, okay? Thank you.

0930

Mr. Bill Walker: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'll be pleased to speak to that. Regardless of what bill they're time-allocating, they are time-allocating yet another bill here, in this case Bill 8, the elevators and credit reporting act. A big piece of that credit reporting act was consumer protection. I spoke to this bill the other day, and I wanted to give some parallels for the people at home listening, because we get caught up in what we're talking about here. The people at home need to understand that when you are talking about consumer protection, they have been very finite in this bill to talk about it, very narrow. How can you talk about consumer protection when this government has actually spent \$8 billion on eHealth, with nothing in return? That should be protecting the consumer, Mr. Speaker. You are one of those taxpayers, Mr. Speaker, and I trust you're not very happy that you didn't get much consumer protection.

There should have been consumer protection, Mr. Speaker, when they went out and sold Hydro One, which they didn't campaign on. There was a net revenue source that, again, the people of Ontario—I don't think anyone gave them the mandate to go and sell that. And now what do you do after that one? They've sold that one off. What are they going to sell next? There's only so much furniture in the house before it collapses.

At the end of the day, I find it very ironic that again they want to time-allocate almost every bill that comes through this House, because they believe that it's their power, their entitlement, their right to actually take away the democratic right of each of us who have been democratically elected by the people of our great ridings to come here and debate. That's what democracy is about: debate, and actually having full, wholesome discussion about whatever topic and whatever bill comes in front of us. It's deplorable, I believe, that they continually time-allocate.

I did weave a little bit into the budget, but I think it's important for you, Mr. Speaker, and I think you'll understand and agree with me, that when they are time-

allocating something as fundamental to government and democracy through a time allocation as the budget, how can they defend that? How can they stand over there, how can they go out door-knocking when someone stands up and says, “Why would you time-allocate something as important as the budget?”

At the end of the day, time allocation, I would suggest, would be used if there’s a real emergency, if something has to be done in a very expedited—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Just to inform the member—I’m trying to be fair here—they didn’t time-allocate the budget, so don’t keep saying that, please. Thank you.

Mr. Bill Walker: My apologies, Mr. Speaker. My understanding is that’s just—

Interjection: It’s coming up the elevator.

Mr. Bill Walker: Yes, it’s stuck in the elevator right now, but it will be coming, I believe, a time-allocation bill about the budget, Mr. Speaker. I’ll be pleased to speak for another 40 minutes on that one and bring out all of the points that I can from that perspective, because I had prepared very copiously for this.

At the end of the day, the time allocation of Bill 8 is in principle no different than if they were going to time-allocate another piece of legislation, which I’m told they may do at some point in the future. What I want to share is the principle of time allocation. Why would you do that? There are 108 representatives, I believe, that are democratically elected—

Mr. Rick Nicholls: It’s 107.

Mr. Bill Walker: Sorry; 107, if they’re all here. Every one of those has issues from their riding. They have perspectives from their riding that they want to bring forward to this House to debate. I was told when I first arrived, in one of our very first sessions, that you want legislation that is clear, unambiguous, concise, and about the people, for the benefit of the people of Ontario. So you want to have proper debate, you want to have thorough and wholesome debate, so that all the different perspectives can arrive.

I’m hopeful that our critic for consumer protection is going to be here because he, again, is someone who takes charge of that file as the critic, and I think he wants and needs time to be able to speak. He is en route, I’m told, right now.

Mr. Speaker, the whole intent of this is to be able to properly and thoroughly debate a topic. At the end of the day, it’s very challenging when a government comes in and uses time allocation in this method. I’m not certain of the real history and origins, but I would have expected coming in that that was for something that was really sensitive, very time-specific, that you would have to get something through, like special needs or rare disease medicines that we’ve heard about in this House a lot of times, Speaker. That would be something that you would think you would expedite.

We had many families come through the doors here saying their child or their family member or their friend can’t get something like the rare-disease special drug that

they need. That I would expect you would use time allocation with, and you would hope that this House, particularly with the government—that’s where they should use a tool like that, and say, “I want you to join with me and make this happen, so we can actually help that family.” Time-allocate there, not time-allocate something like this bill.

I’m not suggesting that this bill isn’t important. The member who brought it forward, I’m sure, has huge amounts of problems. Certainly, here in urban areas like Toronto, there are a lot of issues with elevators. But at the end of the day, what I suggested yesterday when I was speaking about this topic was: Did they really go out and consult the industry? Once again, they are taking a punitive approach to this bill. They’re actually wanting to come in with fines, and they want to put very specific timelines in. I’m okay with specific timelines, if they’ve been discussed and they’re rational and pragmatic, and if the companies actually have the ability.

Use this wonderful, glorious building, Mr. Speaker. I was told yesterday one of the first elevators in Ontario was installed here at the Legislature. That elevator is still operable, but that means that parts are harder to get. That means that we sometimes have to custom fabricate to be able to get there. You can’t do that on a unilaterally set “two weeks or you’re going to get fined if you don’t comply with this.” There have to be realities when you’re in situations like that.

If it’s a case of companies not being able to deliver on time, part of that, I’m told, is all about the lack of skilled trades and the number of skilled technicians. Again, this government has limited many of those programs. The high-skills major programs across most of Ontario have been either cut or they have been taken back or scaled back, which means they’ve actually slowed or limited—in many cases, completely—the supply of those people coming through the skilled trades. I’m not certain why they have done that. Skilled trades are crucial to our economy. They’re crucial to our province going forward.

In my great riding of Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound, we have Bruce Power, the nuclear plant. They’re going to refurbish six units there, Mr. Speaker—clean, affordable power. They’re going to need those skilled trades. I had the privilege of working there. I was down on the floor and I saw the demographic. There are a lot of people who are going to be able to retire, and we need that pipeline. We need people who are coming up to be able to replace them.

At the end of the day, I think it’s another failure of this government to not have had enough skilled trades in the system. They have done things with the apprenticeship ratios that have totally stifled the ability for people to come through the training programs. With a lot of our young people, there was such a movement—and again, I’m totally supportive of academics and people being able to go to university, but there was such a focus on only going to university that it’s left a gap for those people who want to work with their hands.

I have two sons, Zach and Ben. Zach will be 24; Ben will be 21. They are both, ironically, going to go into the

skilled trades, and I'm not saying this just because—it's not a self-serving piece of information that I'm doing, but there are two who are coming through. It's been very daunting to get them into the programs. It's been very daunting for the employers, who want them, to be able to actually put them through the system because of some of the things that this government has done in regard to the regulation and the limitation of those.

If we don't have those skilled trades coming through—you talk about all of the infrastructure that they say they're going to build. Again, I still haven't seen a lot of money come out. Where are those skilled trades going to come from? You don't just create those overnight.

It comes back to this time allocation. Why would they time-allocate a bill that's not an absolute crisis and emergency today? I get that to those people who are in a high-rise, it definitely seems like a crisis, and it could be. I'm not taking away from that whatsoever, Mr. Speaker. But as this government does in many cases, they whitewash. They don't go after the bad actors that are out there and are perpetual people in non-compliance. They change the whole legislation to say, "Everyone shall." They then come out and say, "Oh, I'm sorry. We can do better. There were unintended consequences." They talk about unintended consequences, and then they'll come out with terms like "stretch goals." And they'll say, "Oh, well, we didn't really mean that. That was a bit of a stretch goal." The people of Ontario don't want stretch goals. Maybe if they didn't time-allocate pieces of legislation, my colleagues, members of the third party, and even maybe some of their members would actually come to the table and debate legislation, and put it out there, that is actually about governing on behalf, and in the best interests, of the people of Ontario.

It challenges me when I hear that they are going to time-limit and time-allocate. We, as a principle, say it's about debate. It's about democracy. It's about people having a say. Our great forefathers and foremothers, who died in the wars to allow us the freedom of speech—it comes back to being even that fundamental. The ability for us to come to this Legislature as democratically elected representatives on behalf of the people we're given the privilege to serve—who have, and should, enjoy the privilege of full and wholesome debate in this House.

It's interesting that I find again—I'm going to go back to it because it did start in the first part of this Legislature this morning. The Minister of Energy had 20 minutes on the clock to talk about the bill that was before us at that time, the budget measures act. He spent maybe a minute and a half or two minutes, so why would he not spend the full 20 minutes? Why would he not put out the detail?

Our job is to challenge and question. They talk about the 25% rebate. Let's not forget, Mr. Speaker, they borrowed \$25 billion, which is going to cost the taxpayer—particularly the youth sitting in front of us, our pages, and our children and our grandchildren—between \$43 billion and \$93 billion, according to the Auditor General, an officer of this Legislature whose job is to come in and give

you true facts. They did that, and yet they're not going to stand there and talk about it. They're not going to stand there and give you the other side of the coin. I raised this in the House to him, in my reply: They talk about the 25% rebate, but what about the 300% increase that they never seem to want to actually accept?

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He talked about the seniors' grant that they were going to give out, the \$750. I think, again, that's a great thing for those people that need it, but if he just lowered prices, in many cases—if they didn't continue to increase taxes. In my almost seven years here, they have had record revenues, and yet they continue to run deficits and add to that debt burden. They're digging the hole deeper.

At the end of the day, those seniors are paying more and getting less. There's less out there for them to actually utilize, and now they're coming out and trying to say: "We're going to give you a program, and let's just pretend the world is rosy." That's not acceptable. They tried that through the energy cycle in the last three or four years. He proudly stands in this House and says, "There are more programs that we're creating." Why is it a good thing to actually create more programs rather than fixing the problem? Why would we not address the problem?

That's the struggle I have with time allocation in this House. We should be able to bring those valid points up. We should be able to talk about issues in this House and do our job, as I said earlier, which the member from St. Catharines has truly shared with me: "That is your job, to hold the government to account. That's any opposition's job. You're the Queen's loyal opposition. Your job is to stand in this House and hold the government to account." I will continue to do that, regardless of whether they try to time-allocate or not. We'll utilize the time now about time allocation, about the democratic principle.

I'm going to use another example, similar to time allocation. They actually stripped the ability for municipalities—we'll remember this back to the Green Energy Act—to have a say. In essence, that's a form of time allocation, because they cut their debate totally off. They said, "You shall not be able to say. We will come into your community and we'll tell you whether you are going to have wind turbines," in that specific example, "or you're not going to have them."

I find, again, that they have not, over my six and a half, seven years, even been willing to open up that debate. They know it's wrong. I think they know, the ones that I speak to individually. A few of them are in ridings where it's been very challenging because of things like the Green Energy Act. Yet I'm trusting, from cabinet and from the Premier's upper echelon—they're saying: "We're not even opening that talk. We're going to continue to close debate on that issue."

It's very interesting, when we think about time allocation: Why would they do this? You start to wonder. We're getting close to the end of the session; I'm not exactly certain how many days we have left here in the Legislature. Why are they now starting to time-allocate? That's why, in the back hallways, there was discussion that

they will be time-allocating the budget in the next couple of days, or certainly the next week. That, to me, is a fundamental issue.

That's why I was bringing it to the floor. It's something that I think the electorate needs to understand, and it can't just be sprung—if they don't happen to tune in and watch on a certain morning, and all of a sudden that debate is over. So I'm trying to give them a bit of a preview to what may happen and what may be coming at us. I want it on record from the Progressive Conservatives that we do not agree with time allocation. We do not agree that, certainly, with something as significant as the budget, we should be time-allocating.

Even this morning, the government introduced this and isn't speaking again. Every election, just before they prorogue, they want to ram a whole bunch of legislation through so they can trot out there on the campaign trail and say, "We did this, this, this and this." On many of these things, they've had 15 years to get it done.

The wage equity act—they brought it out last week, I think it was, or the week before: "This is an absolute priority of our government." Where was it for the first 14 and a half years that they were in power, when it wasn't a priority? Because it was identified way, way back. The Premier herself continues to say, "I'm the champion of wage equity." It's interesting that just before a budget, there's yet another little line item where you can say, "We did that." You can go out and say, "We've been the champion of this." Where is the execution? Like many of their budget act measures, they're actually not going to happen until 2019 or 2020, so they're making promises today that have no impact before we get to the actual polls on June 7.

I find it, again, very interesting that when I walk in—I received a text this morning apprising me that the schedule today was going to change and they were going to start to time-allocate some pieces of legislation. Why weren't they forthright? Our House leaders, the three parties, sit; why wasn't that established yesterday? Why wasn't that established Monday, saying, "We're going to do this"?

They talk all the time about plans. I'd like an understanding of the plan that they suggested they have, because this plan is pretty quick to change. We moved another shell here. That then makes you a little bit cynical. What's the real reason for this time allocation? What are they going to try to ram in on another piece of legislation that is self-serving? And we know—I'm going to use an example. They took away the ability, as you know, Mr. Speaker, for the Auditor General to actually review advertising and determine whether that is partisan—crass partisan political advertising—or whether it is true government advertising. We brought that to light as the opposition, as we should, as our job should be.

As I have said, the member for St. Catharines and the chief government whip, who has been here a long, long time—I totally respect the years of service that he has given to the province of Ontario. But I find it very ironic that we have this type of movement coming forward, that they change the shell game. They actually do something

as cynical as stripping the ability of the Auditor General to be able to say, "Yes, that's a proper ad," or "No, that is a partisan Liberal ad."

At the end of the day—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Point of order, from the Minister of Energy.

Hon. Glenn Thibeault: I thought I was coming in to discuss the bill on elevators. I'm just wondering if—are we not talking about that?

Miss Monique Taylor: No, it's time allocation, Minister.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): I understand your complaint.

Please try to stick to time allocation on Bill 8. I'd appreciate it. You have drifted a little bit. I have been more than reasonable, I think. If you could move back into the area of that, it would be appreciated.

Mr. Bill Walker: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and I do apologize. I am truly trying to provide context. I will just have to take a couple of seconds here now that the minister has stood and just reiterate that I found it interesting—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): I don't think you will be reiterating. I think you will go to where I wanted you to go. Thank you.

Mr. Bill Walker: Absolutely, Mr. Speaker.

Speaking of Bill 8 that they are time-allocating—it's interesting whether you use the term "time allocation" or you just sit down when you have 18 minutes left on the clock. That's another way of actually self-imposing time allocation. Not speaking about something as significant as the budget is a time-allocation tactic that I believe someone in this House, perhaps the Minister of Energy, might have employed earlier this morning.

Mr. Speaker, for Bill 8, what we want to make sure is that we actually have—and I said it yesterday when I spoke to it. We want to have robust debate. We want the ability for all three parties in this House to do their job and represent their communities, the interests of their people, and frankly, the larger public of Ontario, and bring good thought process. We have brought hundreds of amendments to this House, which again the Liberal government has said, "No. We know better than you. We are going to just ram this through." And then they bring in time allocation to truly ram it through the House, Mr. Speaker. This is an unacceptable practice, as I said earlier, unless it's for something life-saving, unless it's something like rare diseases—which they have not supported, this government; they have done nothing on that file.

Then we need to be able to ensure that they respect the principles of democracy, that they actually respect debate and they respect the will of the people of Ontario and they don't use time allocation for their own self-serving purposes. I hope to goodness, Mr. Speaker, that they won't bring in time allocation on the budget. At this point, Mr. Speaker, out of respect for you, I'm going to stop going

off that lane a little bit and I'm going to leave some time for my critic when he gets here.

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

Mr. Taras Natyshak: I want to commend our colleague, the member from Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound. He did 23 minutes on the clock with no notes, stream of consciousness. He is well versed in this file and many others. I appreciate him informing this House.

My experience in time-allocation debates is that we're debating the merit of time allocation in whether or not this bill should be considered to be expedited through this House for whatever reason the government purports it to be. The member from Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound hit on some of those measures where we might expect time allocation, whether the province was in a state of emergency or whether there was a crisis that had arisen that required legislative intervention on the spot, immediately, with fast and swift passage through this House. That would be reasonable. That would be expected, and I think that would be condoned by members of our communities.

My problem here is that we are seeing the use of time allocation more and more, and after 15 years of government, it seems like they have hit the gas pedal. They've hit the throttle on legislation.

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I leaned on our capable and competent Clerks who gave me some interesting information: In the last legislative session, 38.6% of all government bills were time-allocated—more than a third of government bills. Today, in this session, two out of six government bills have been time-allocated—that's 33%. If this time allocation passes, which we suspect it will because the Liberal government has a majority, that will bring bills that have been time-allocated in this chamber to 50%. We also know that the budget is close to being time-allocated. They collapsed debate on it today and we can expect the natural process, from what they have been doing, will be time allocation. So, close to 80% of the bills that we have seen in this Legislature this session will have been time-allocated. How is that democratic?

In which way does that serve the public? What is the message sent to the general public in our constituencies? It's that their voice doesn't matter. It's that their ideas don't matter. We're going to fast-track debate in this House. We will condense the committee process as well. It's unbelievable. It's an affront to the democratic process. It's an affront to the people who sent us here to do the work on their behalf. It's unbelievable. These are important bills.

I would suggest that elevator safety is an important bill to give due consideration to. You want your elevators to move fast, but you don't want the bills that deal with their safety to move fast through this House. You want to ensure that you have done your due diligence and that the requirements for elevator safety in this province are comprehensive and have had all aspects reviewed.

Speaking to the bill, Bill 8, on consumer credit reports and elevator availability, you want to ensure that, in this

day and age of hyper-technological advancements and elements that infiltrate personal information, we're doing our very best to protect consumers from those threats and that their credit ratings are protected. But, no, not in this House; in this House, the government knows best. They'll drive this thing through and, ultimately, no question, they will miss the mark as they do time and time again. We'll have to come back to these pieces of legislation to fill some glaring gaps that exist.

They've taken no counsel from the opposition; they take no counsel at committee. The next figure I'd like to know is how many opposition amendments have actually been adopted by this government. I'd say very, very few. They're not in the business of dialogue in this province and certainly not in this chamber. They're not in the business of collaborating with their colleagues in a collaborative, congenial way. They are dictatorial, and they're jamming and ramming legislation through.

Why? Let's look at it as it really is. They are on the cusp of an election that will see their demise. There's no question. We are absolutely sure that this government has run its course. They are doing everything they can, throwing everything at the wall to see what sticks as a last-ditch effort. That's to be expected.

It is our job to be critical of the 15 years that they had to get it right; the 15-year track record that they could have listened to the opposition to build comprehensive policy, to build collaboration and dialogue. They could have gotten it right. They will learn their lesson on June 7. I am certain of it. Our communities are telling us—

Interjection.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Yes, my colleague from Hamilton Mountain. The next time allocation, the most important time allocation, is the limited time that this government has remaining in this chamber. It'll be a good day. That'll be time allocation that I can support because our communities need so much more and deserve so much more.

What they've done in their budget is what we would call, in football and in sports, the Hail Mary pass. It is a last-ditch effort: Close your eyes, throw as long and as hard as you can, and hope it finds a receiver on the end. Speaker, no one is going to be there to catch that ball. The public have already seen this government's actions: They've lived under the tenure of a government that has not prioritized their needs. They've seen their health care system degrade. They've seen hallway medicine. They have seen opportunities lost in ensuring that some of the basic fundamentals of health care, meaning pharmacare and dental care—those opportunities have been lost and have not gone far enough in this last budget. They've seen our hydro system absolutely collapse when hydro systems in our neighbouring jurisdictions, in Quebec and in Manitoba, under public ownership have flourished, have spawned economic development and have been used as strategic assets for economic development. They have bungled—use every term that you can use to describe the disaster that is our hydro system, and our health care system.

That is the overwhelming theme when I talk to constituents. Whether it be hydro or health care or education or long-term care or infrastructure or our corrections system, the overarching theme is that these systems that are pillars, foundations of our province are in crisis. They have not been supported, they have been diluted; they've been absolutely under-resourced, because this is a government that has prioritized themselves, and we see it today in a time allocation motion.

Their priority is to get this legislation out the door, shop it around, try to gain some votes, see if they can bump up their polling numbers without actually putting the effort in to ensuring that legislation is comprehensive.

This is not the way that this place works. Let's go back in time and see when debate was thorough, when it was robust, and I think it provided for better laws, better bills—

Mr. John Yakabuski: They screamed against time allocation.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Absolutely. They used to. There are some wonderful quotes from former Premier Dalton McGuinty on time allocation. He would certainly raise a ruckus when members of the government—

Miss Monique Taylor: And Jim Bradley, the member from St. Catharines.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: And the member for St. Catharines, as well, is encyclopedic in his knowledge of the standing orders and the use or abuse of them. But perhaps the member from St. Catharines is running the plays. Maybe he's calling the shots. Maybe he's the one directing the ship here, because all they've got left is this time allocation motion and the ability for them to flex their legislative muscles and quash any debate.

People have serious issues. They have concerns that they need—and this is the only venue. This is the top of the food chain here. This is where they go. They rely on us to put those issues on the table.

Folks around this bill who are in the elevator repair industry—the technicians, the owners—are wondering how they're going to be able to comply with the timelines built into this bill. You've given no consideration to that. You put hard timelines in there, not recognizing that some of these systems are antiquated, some of them are obsolete. And some of the parts need to be made; they don't even exist anymore. You have given no consideration to the fact that elevator technicians themselves are limited and there aren't enough of them in the industry to actually service the amount of elevators. You're putting the constraints on the bill, but not acknowledging the lack of resources to be able to comply with the constraints. You're putting the cart before the horse, essentially.

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That's something that they haven't acknowledged—or maybe they want to, but they haven't given themselves time to speak to the bill. Some of those backbenchers who actually have the freedom in their caucus to bring forward some of those concerns, maybe they would want the opportunity to ensure that there's some balance in the debate. We would expect that. There was a time in this

House where you could expect at least backbenchers to challenge some of the government initiatives that didn't support the needs of their communities, because that's their job. That no longer happens in this House. It is, again, dictatorial, and government by decree: "We're going to tell you how it goes. If you don't like it, too bad. So sorry." That's the message you're sending to our constituents.

I don't even have to tell them it's happening. They know it, they see it; they feel it every day in their communities. They're telling us that that has to change. I'm telling you, through them, through the Speaker, that you're not doing that. We'll see on June 7 if, in fact, you've learned your lesson. I surmise, Speaker, that that won't be the case.

To the bill: The other aspect is around the enforcement regime for the TSSA and the ability to impose monetary penalties. Again, elevator repair companies and elevator installation companies are expressing some deep concern. This isn't a just-in-time industry. This isn't something that rolls off the assembly line that you're going to be able to fix. It's one of those traditional industries. We've had elevators in Ontario for 100 years. They're a system that requires hands-on knowledge. This isn't something that a robot or a computer can fix; this is a traditional industry. Sometimes, depending on demand and supply, there's a backlog, especially in high-density urban areas like Toronto.

They're going to give the ability for the TSSA to impose mandatory penalties when, in fact, the issues around elevator repair are outside of their control. That's pretty heavy-handed. I would think there would be another way that this government could support, entice, instead of the stick approach—or even need to use the carrot approach. Take a comprehensive look at what that data suggests in terms of the needs of that and—

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: There isn't data. That's why we need—

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Look, I would love to learn more about the bill, Minister. I'd love to know—

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: Come talk to me.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: No, I'm talking to you right now. This is where I get to talk to you. This is the format. It's called debate in the House. I hope that in the remainder of the time—I don't know how much time you have on the clock, but I'd like to hear you get up and talk about it.

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: I have, extensively.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: When? When was it, yesterday? Tell us when you spoke to it. Tell us when any of the members spoke to it, because we don't hear—

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: Check the Hansard.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: We just heard the member from Sudbury—

Miss Monique Taylor: The minister doesn't remember.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: The minister doesn't remember. The minister from Sudbury stood up and spoke to the budget bill for a minute and a half. We didn't learn any-

thing; we didn't learn anything about the nature of that massive document.

I asked him a question, a really important question on schedule 14 in the budget that strips bargaining rights for LIUNA, a long-standing trade union in Ontario; it strips their bargaining rights arbitrarily and hand-delivers them to another union, a competing union. I asked him that question directly. He had a minute and a half to answer it. We didn't get anything out of him. Maybe he'll write me a letter. Maybe he'll join the crowd of LIUNA workers on the front steps on Monday to actually explain the government's position on that.

But that won't happen in this House. That will happen outside, where they can control what they listen to, what they hear and what they respond to. In this House, they understand that as a majority government, they have the power, and they are using it. I would say they are abusing it. They're not listening to opposition members. They don't care. They've lost any regard for any ideas we might have.

I'll tell you, that's not the way Ontarians want their Legislatures and their legislators to work. They want to see collaboration. They understand that there are some good ideas. They understand that there's a need for balance. That is not happening, and I think it is to the demise of the governing party, and it's about time. After 15 years, if you haven't learned your lesson yet, I think we'll see the results of that rearing their heads in June.

These are important issues that deserve our consideration. They are important issues that we are charged to deal with through the honour of being in this House, being elected members. When we see time allocation come in on every bill—now we're getting up to 80% of the bills in this House that are time-allocated—it degrades the role of elected officials. You're demeaning our jobs, and in an age and an era where people are so cynical of the role of politicians and their motives, you're adding to that. You contribute to that, and for shame, if you could feel it.

Speaker, I will leave some time on the clock for my colleagues. I wish we had more time. Unfortunately, the government has decided to—

Mr. John Yakabuski: Take it away from us.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: To drop the guillotine, as the member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke is so apt to say. I appreciate the time that I do—

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: Point of order.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Lou Rinaldi): Point of order.

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: Speaker, I just want to correct the record. I did debate this bill in the leadoff and on time allocation. I just want to say that. Thank you.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Lou Rinaldi): Further debate?

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Whatever that point of order was attempting to do—I think it was attempting to justify that at least one of the members of the Liberal Party has spoken to this bill. Who knows if that is actually the case? We'll

go back in Hansard and try to review what the government's thoughts are on this bill, but unfortunately, they've given such limited time to debate that we may never know. We may never know what their motives are on this bill and on other bills, and whether they will have gotten it right the first time. My suspicion is that they have not.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Lou Rinaldi): Further debate?

Miss Monique Taylor: It truly is always a pleasure for me to rise in this House and to have an opportunity to speak on behalf of the residents of Hamilton Mountain. Last night, before I went to bed, I believed I was waking up and coming into this House to speak about the budget motion, but instead the government adjourned that debate, and we expect time allocation to come next on that budget. I have been asked now to speak to the Access to Consumer Credit Reports and Elevator Availability Act.

As you can imagine, Speaker, the preparation time that you're given when you are given last-minute notice of the change of bills and the change of directions of this House is very limited, but I'm grateful for the previous speakers from my caucus, who have laid out a road map, who have allowed me the ability to read their speaking notes. As well, I spent some time actually reading the bill itself, and it brought back many thoughts of concerns that my constituents brought to me. It's unfortunate that I didn't have the time to speak to the budget this morning as I expected, but there are a few things within this bill that it will give me a great opportunity to address.

Consumer credit reports were something that I recall myself. As many in this House know, I was a single mom; I am a single mom. Before being elected, I was a hospitality worker. I struggled as a single parent. Credit scores were always a problem for me, and I know I'm not alone. It was something that I struggled with, with credit rating. I found out very quickly that first of all, to even find out what my credit score was, I had to pay somebody to get that information. That was completely unfair. Here I was struggling and trying to build up a credit rating, so that I could get a credit card or I could get something to help alleviate my household bills—credit really isn't the way to go, but that's the way life goes.

Also, I found out at that time that once I access that credit report, it actually gives me a hit on my credit reporting, so my credit score would actually go down if I asked for a credit rating. That was something that I looked for within this bill, to see if it was addressed. I'm looking directly at the minister, because I did not see addressed in this bill the hit against a credit rating when you access your credit rating. I didn't see this in this bill. If it's not in this bill, I hope that she's listening and that she's considering it, because it's not just me. Other women and other people have brought that same issue to my attention, and it brought me back to my own thoughts and my own experience. That was something that I didn't find in this bill, and I did look for it specifically.

The other thing that I thought about was women, particularly, who came to me. Their husbands had left them or they had split up for whatever reason, whatever the case

may be. Because the bills and many things were in their husband's name, even though they worked, they didn't have good credit scores, because they hadn't accessed paying bills and having credit cards in their names and those kinds of things, so they didn't have the credit rating that they needed to be able to get a credit card, to be able to start their life on their own, to ensure that they and their children could have the necessities of life and the security that comes with being able to pull out that credit card when you need it.

There are many instances where you need to have a credit card. You can't rent a car without a credit card. You can't rent hotel rooms, book a flight or pay for a drink on a flight if you do not have a credit card in your pocket. There are many things that effect people if they don't have the ability to have that credit card. If you're affecting the credit score, if you're not accessing the credit because you haven't been able to build credit, then you are already put behind. You are a second-class citizen because you don't have access to a credit card. I didn't see those types of things addressed in this bill, which I think are big issues and need to be addressed.

We need to ensure that people have access to their credit scores, so I was happy to see that. I'm happy to see that the security freezes were put into this bill, because we know that in this day and age of technology, many people's identities are being stolen, so we need to make sure that we have protections in place to allow people the ability to freeze their security without any cost to them, and ensure that they have the ability to do that electronically, through mail or through different means. Again, not everybody has access to Internet, so by doing it by telephone or doing it by mail—having those options is certainly important.

I know I don't have a lot of time. The other thing that I want to touch on is the elevator act because, again, I will take it back to my constituents and the concerns that they have brought to me directly. Elevators being out of service for months is a huge problem for seniors with walkers—for seniors, whether they have a walker or not, walking up 10 flights of stairs or 15 flights of stairs. Look at the high-rises, and this building. Imagine not having an elevator accessible to you; it's a huge hindrance to anyone. I don't want to walk up 30 floors of stairs. I'm just telling you, Speaker, it ain't gonna happen. I don't know what I would do in that position, but it's a reality.

I understand where the minister comes from on their timelines, but if we don't have the tools in place to ensure that people are able to get that job done, then it's a fighting battle and she's asking people to do something that isn't possible.

I'm sorry that I don't have much more time, but I really do appreciate the fact that I was able to have a few moments to have a few things to say.

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

Debate deemed adjourned.

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

The House recessed from 1015 to 1030.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Today, as part of a tribute to a former member, we have in the Speaker's gallery a couple of guests that I'm sure you will welcome. The parliamentary chair of the Ontario Association of Former Parliamentarians and Speaker in the 35th Parliament, Mr. David Warner, is here. Welcome, David. And we have the former MPP for Scarborough East during the 36th and 37th Parliaments, Mr. Steve Gilchrist. Welcome, Steve.

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: It's my pleasure to welcome to Queen's Park today page captain Curtis Metcalf's parents, Jerrica and Chris, and brother, Brad. Curtis is walking in his mom's footsteps, Speaker, as she was here at Queen's Park as a page just a couple of years ago.

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: I'd like to welcome to the House today Isabelle Keeley and J.J. Lehmann. They are here to have lunch with their MPP. Welcome.

Mr. Arthur Potts: I think I also noticed in the Speaker's gallery an old friend, Greg Vezina, whose grandfather gave the name to the Vezina Trophy for the best goalie in the NHL. Welcome, Greg.

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: On behalf of the member from Dufferin—Caledon, I'd like to welcome to Queen's Park Carol Good and Doug Prince from Caledon East, as well as Cheryl May and Warren May from Palgrave. Welcome.

Hon. Nathalie Des Rosiers: On behalf of the member from Etobicoke Centre, I'd like to welcome Nicole Arsenault and Leah Arsenault, the mother and sister of our page Hannah Arsenault.

Also in the gallery is teacher Mrs. Goslin and, probably later on, grades 5 and 6 from Mother Cabrini Catholic School.

On behalf of the member from Durham, I also want to welcome the grandmother of our page Sophie Hamilton. The grandmother's name is Dianne Mott, and she will be in the public gallery this morning. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. Paul Miller: I'd like to welcome my former EA, Margo Duncan, to the Legislature today. She's sitting with Kevin.

Mrs. Cristina Martins: I wish to introduce a number of guests visiting us here today at Queen's Park from my riding of Davenport, the young girls from St. Helen's and St. Anthony's schools who participated in this year's Girls' Government program at my constituency office: Hayley Furtado, Amber Stiles, Myrian Ashor, Alexis Alexiou, Sienna Loree, Dennetta Leticia, Noelia Retana, Alexis De Sá, Ira Nicole Perez, Cassandra Aman, Faith De Quintal, Melissa Rozell, Mafalda Fresco, Christine Erhirhie and Maria Helena da Cruz and, as well, their teachers Ms. Irene Rodrigues, Ms. Fiona McGrath, Principal Fatima Formariz, Ms. Laura Nigro and Ms. Elisa Rebelo. Welcome to Queen's Park today, girls.

Mr. Bob Delaney: I'm pleased to introduce my constituency assistant, Zeelaf Fatima, and her friend Alex Gignac, who are in the members' east gallery. They're visiting us and seeing question period for the first time.

Hon. Kevin Daniel Flynn: It's a pleasure to rise today and introduce our page captain, Shivanshi Patel. She's proudly joined by her parents, Nehal and Ashish Patel, her sister, Janki, her grandmother, Jaya, and grandparents Madhu and Bhanu. Speaker, please welcome them all to Queen's Park for a very special day.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you, and welcome.

For those who are here for the tribute, would the members please join me in welcoming the family and the friends of the late Peter Langdon Preston, MPP for Brant-Haldimand during the 36th Parliament, who are seated in the Speaker's gallery: sons Dan and Samuel Preston, brother Paul Preston, sister-in-law Susan Preston, grandson Mackenzie Preston, nephew Mark Preston, niece Alyson Johnson, mayor of Haldimand Ken Hewitt and many other friends. Welcome. We're glad you're here for this wonderful tribute.

PETER LANGDON PRESTON

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

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: Speaker, I believe you will find that we have unanimous consent to recognize the former member of provincial Parliament from Brant-Haldimand, Mr. Peter Preston, with a representative from each caucus speaking for up to five minutes.

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

The member from Hamilton East-Stoney Creek.

Mr. Paul Miller: Thank you, Speaker. First of all, I would like to welcome the Preston family, who are with us here today in the Legislature.

When you watch politics, Speaker, from your television at home, it can seem very adversarial. However, when we have the opportunity to look back on the lives of those who have served, I think the real and personal sides of politicians come out. These are the times when we all realize that we share a lot more in common than we think. I hope that this will be one of those moments, after having read and learned about MPP Peter Preston.

Peter was certainly a strong opponent of the NDP. He was a backbencher during the days of Mike Harris. I think it's fair to say we might not have seen eye to eye on a lot of political issues. However, after reading deeper into the life of Peter, I learned that he was a passionate and dedicated individual who had a fun side to him as well. These traits really resonate with me.

To start, I will say that his resumé was certainly extensive and unique. He worked in the insurance industry, served on the Grimsby town council, played a large role with the Royal Canadian Engineers and was the founder of the Preston House Group Home, which was a group

home for boys aged 12 to 18. To top it all off, he founded the Rocking P Peruvian Ranch, where he bred and raised Peruvian horses. I appreciated the fact that he did not stick to one industry, but ventured out into multiple areas, leaving an impact wherever he went.

I also appreciated his love for travel. A couple of years ago, way back in 2012, there was an article in the *Hamilton Spectator*. You might be expecting me to reference a political article here, but it was actually a travel article written about the beautiful, 14-room Casa Isabel hotel in Puerto Vallarta, Mexico. Accompanying the article is a photo of a picturesque view.

Interestingly enough, the article's writer, Al MacRury, had travelled down to the Mexican town to interview some of the Hamiltonians who were living and visiting there. Among these Hamiltonians was the then 77-year-old former MPP from Haldimand-Norfolk, Peter Preston.

It sounded as if he really loved it down there, as he was quoted as saying, "I'm not leaving here. They can send my ashes home." No doubt a lover of travel through and through.

As I spent more time reading and learning about him, I found pictures of him on a boat off the coast of Mexico, another of him fishing with what appears to be a relative or close friend, and finally, a picture of him catching one of the largest and weirdest-looking fish I've ever seen. It made me want to get my rod and go fishing right there and then. I would say he was certainly someone who inspired and evoked interest.

The other thing about Peter was that he took it upon himself to give back to his community. He cared about all of his constituents and was always willing to lend a helping hand to the poor and less fortunate. While serving as MPP, he transformed the constituency office into a food bank depot, in collaboration with the Caledonia and District Food Bank. For a time his constituency office stood as the only food bank in the small community of Cayuga, Ontario.

In a 1996 *Hamilton Spectator* article written by Michelle Ruby, Peter was asked about the food bank that he established, and he responded with the following: "It is simply not enough to preach the word of volunteerism and community spirit. I feel the best examples are by leading and taking the initiative."

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Well, these words really resonated with me. As poverty reduction critic, I know that real help for the homeless and less fortunate comes from those who actually take it upon themselves to act and get involved. There are so many in my hometown of Hamilton and in this province who take it upon themselves to do what they can to help the less fortunate. Without these people who lead with example, I really don't know where we'd all be.

As I read the quote by Peter, I couldn't help but smile. While yes, Peter and myself had widely different interpretations of the way our province should operate—in the Legislature, we would have debated to the ends of the earth on different issues—however, in reading the quote, I

also realized that we shared a common thread. His passion and his spirit of volunteerism are something that I admire and respect.

I hope that when we walk out of this Legislature today, the image we will keep in our heads of Peter is of someone who was passionate, dedicated, fun-loving and selfless. Thank you, Peter, for your incredible dedication to our province.

It has been a privilege to welcome the family and friends of Peter here today. Thanks to you, as well, for sharing Peter with us.

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

Mr. Mike Colle: I'm here to speak about the life of a former parliamentarian, Peter Preston. I had the pleasure and the fun to serve with Peter in those wild and woolly days of 1995 to 1999. I remember Steve Gilchrist was here. Although we had some very interesting battles, we also made some friends. I can remember I found out that Gary Fox used to raise donkeys. We always used to joke with Gary about him and his donkeys, but then we found out that Peter was into horses. They would compare notes all the time. I remember the crazy discussions they would have.

These are the kind of things you don't read about in Hansard or in the media, but there's a human side to all the parliamentarians who have gone through this House, and especially in those days. In fact, some people who we served with, on both sides, we still keep in contact with.

Peter was one of them. I remember that Peter—although, as the member from Stoney Creek said, he had different political views, he was always a gentleman, very respectful, never over the top. He was always respectful of this House. I know he was always very good on his feet with points of order. That's one thing I remember, him standing up about certain procedural points. But always, again, a very authentic guy.

I know Peter served his country in the Royal Canadian Engineers, assisting in military and reconstruction operations in Canada. That was another part of his life. After he did that, he served on the Grimsby local council as an alderman. With his wife, Joanne, they picked up this incredible love of Peruvian horses—one of the rarest, oldest horses. Next to his wife and his family, that was his true love, these horses.

What he did was, he transformed that love of horses into a love of children and young teenagers who basically had no place to go. That was his real true love. He combined that love of horses in creating his ranch, where these young teenagers could go and get their life together. He really was passionate about that. He believed that was something that he was obliged to do as a citizen and as a caring person.

He was also very much connected with the country of Peru because of his love of horses. In fact, in 1998, he greeted the Peruvian president on behalf of the province during a state visit. He really had that connection to Peru and to the horses.

But, again, the foster care of children was really Peter's lifelong vocation. He took in kids from all over, especially

First Nations children, and created a home for them. These are the things that sometimes don't make the newspapers, but this is the good that Peter did beyond being here in the Legislature for those years. He called it his Rocking P ranch. This is something that he went all out for. He was a 100% type of guy and he put it all into these good things.

As you know, he had a career here when there was a change in boundaries. He had to run in another riding. He wasn't re-elected, but on the other hand, he went back and continued his life passion, and that was helping children and making sure they got support in his community.

Again, he was ultimately a person who put family, love of children who lost their way—he really put his heart and soul into that, and his money.

Thirdly, he just loved these horses. Some people get attached to all kinds of incredible animals. That was Peter's love. As you know, if you have love of animals, you also have love of people, and that was Peter Preston as I remember him.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Further tribute. The member from Haldimand–Norfolk.

Mr. Toby Barrett: We certainly welcome Peter's family and his friends, our local mayor and his loyal staff.

I first came to know Peter Preston back in 1995. We were both nominated as candidates for neighbouring ridings and started working together on various tactics to see if we could get ourselves elected. The odds were not good. My riding hadn't seen a Conservative member, provincially or federally, for 20 years. But what is truly astounding was that Peter was aspiring to overthrow a 76-year Liberal dynasty in a dogleg riding that followed the mighty Grand from the outskirts of Cambridge all the way down to Lake Erie—it was a riding that had been gerrymandered for those 76 years—to try to break that Harry Nixon–Bob Nixon domination. That's what he was up against.

So here was a fellow named Peter Preston—a name that's got quite a ring to it politically—who had the gall and the cockeyed optimism to think he could overturn this Liberal dynasty dating back to 1919; as well, to beat the party that was then in opposition. Conventional wisdom held that it would form the next government.

Peter and his campaign manager, his son Dan, who is here, were confident that they could also beat the amicable, popular Liberal MPP Ron Eddy, a good friend of many in this House and in Brant county.

On top of that, we were both under the gun to live up to the mantle of the Honourable Jimmy Allan, who had held the southern part of the riding from 1951 to 1974 and was defeated over regional government, something that there were still some hard feelings on.

I attended Peter's nomination night back in 1995 at the Caledonia High School. We were told our chances were not good to win. We were told not to expect Mike Harris to visit the ridings—and he didn't.

But Peter and his son—we got together at the Rocking JP Peruvian Ranch to work out a brochure. The high tech

at that time was taking videocassettes around to mailboxes to explain who we were. I filmed myself running a combine, and Peter featured himself forking horse manure. This is how he introduced himself to the people in the riding.

As we know, Peter and his wife, Joanne, had horses, hence the name the Rocking JP ranch. These were not ordinary horses. Peter and especially his beautiful wife, Joanne, were renowned breeders of the Peruvian Paso horse, a breed that had been isolated in northern Peru for 400 years; hence, it retained certain characteristics: an ambling gait, somewhere between a walk and a canter, with an outward swinging of the legs. You would never see any other horse move this way, and it created a very smooth, comfortable ride. I attended a number of those horse shows. There would be busloads of Peruvian Canadians who would come to see their cherished horse. The consul general of Peru would attend.

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Peter first served as an alderman in the town of Grimsby. As Dan indicated, his father always had a passion for politics. He said, “We always were a political family.” There wasn’t an election that his father and his family didn’t help with in one way or another. So Peter made the decision to run provincially. As Dan said, “Dad said we can run and we can do this.” And he did win. He came in the 1995 election as a Common Sense Revolutionary, but he was also truly a Progressive Conservative with a social conscience, as we know, realizing that government couldn’t and shouldn’t be all things to all people, and there was a place for more so a hand up rather than a handout.

Now in the House—Peter sat over that way behind me—MPP Preston had the dubious distinction of dishing out outrageous interjections. I won’t dwell on those. Many of them weren’t fit to print. They never made it into Hansard. Enough said on that one.

He grew up in Grimsby with one brother and two sisters. He was a police cadet, a fisherman and a firefighter, and enlisted as a non-commissioned officer with the Royal Canadian Engineers. He served for six years in Petawawa and Chilliwack.

He and Joanne had three daughters, Sandy, Suzie and Stephanie, and two sons, Sam, as I mentioned, and Dan. After a number of years with State Farm, he then set up his own private company, the Preston Group. He and Joanne came down to our area in Cayuga, established the ranch and set up Preston House for the young fellows to work with horses.

Peter Preston was a bit of a man’s man. He was brusque and very action-oriented. He was a connoisseur of wine—I didn’t know that—with a heart of gold—I knew that. After Queen’s Park, he served with distinction on the victim rights tribunal, retired in Puerto Vallarta, as we’ve just heard, and passed away at his home in Hamilton on October 16, 2016. His funeral was held at the beautiful Cayuga church, St. John the Divine. I attended with his friends and his family and his loyal staff.

Thank you.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I want to thank all the members for their kind and heartfelt thoughts, but I have to confess it’s probably the first time I’ve had to consider whether or not I had to have a member withdraw some unparliamentary language, like “horse manure” and “gerrymandering.” But all was said with a true intent of the heart of what has been said about our dear friend Peter.

I was fortunate enough that, being from Brant, I did get a chance to meet him—not as opponents, but in the aftermath—and he offered me some kind advice that I took to heart, and I still remember it to this day.

On behalf of all of us, thank you for the gift of Peter. Also, to let you know, we will produce a DVD and a copy of Hansard for the family to have as a lifelong tribute to this wonderful man. Thank you for the gift of Peter.

Applause.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Also in the gallery is a former member from Brampton North in the 36th Parliament and Brampton Centre in the 37th Parliament, Mr. Joe Spina. Joe, thank you for joining us.

REPORT, FINANCIAL ACCOUNTABILITY OFFICER

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I also beg to inform the House that the following document was tabled: the report entitled Electricity Trade Agreement—An Assessment of the Ontario-Quebec Electricity Trade Agreement, Spring 2018, from the Financial Accountability Office of Ontario.

ORAL QUESTIONS

ONTARIO BUDGET

Mr. Victor Fedeli: My question is for the Premier.

Ontario has suffered another fiscal setback due solely to the actions of this Premier. Moody’s credit rating agency has downgraded the province’s credit outlook from stable to negative as a direct result of their election document budget. Moody’s said that “spending pressure will challenge the province’s ability to sustain balanced fiscal results across multiple years.”

Moody’s also assumes the budget will lead to “an upward trend in the debt burden and a faster rise in interest expense than previously anticipated.”

Speaker, why is this Premier, in her shameless bid to cling to power, putting Ontario in an even more precarious financial position and harming Ontario’s reputation in the process?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I know the Minister of Finance is going to want to comment in the supplementary. Let me just say—and this is part of the message that the member opposite neglected—Moody’s has confirmed our Aa2 credit rating. They have adjusted their outlook,

we know that, but this is not a credit rating downgrade. Ontario's debt continues to be highly marketable. That reflects the confidence of investors in our economy.

We do value the input of the rating agencies. Our responsibility is, and it always will be, to support the care and opportunity for people in this province. That's the role of government: to do the things that people cannot do by themselves. I know that the Minister of Finance is working with the rating agencies, and he will comment, but our credit rating has been confirmed, and we will continue to work to make sure that people in this province have everything that they need.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I'm getting the signals.

Supplementary.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Back to the Premier: This is not any kind of a forecast from Moody's. This is an outright condemnation of this government's fiscal policies. The Premier likes to say she is making "conscious choices" that plunge Ontario into deficit, but the fact is that this government used money from reserves and the sale of assets to try to artificially balance the budget. It's not a conscious choice; it's a consequence of one-time money running out. They ran out of things to sell. This means we need more money to pay interest on our debt, and less money is now available for needed services.

Moody's sees right through this cling to power. Does the Premier really expect Ontario families won't?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Finance.

Hon. Charles Sousa: The member quotes Moody's, so I'm going to quote Moody's as well. Here it is, word for word: "The affirmation of the Aa2" rating for the province of Ontario "reflects the province's ability to rely on a large, diversified economic base with sound wealth generation that supports a strong provincial revenue base, a greater degree of flexibility relative to global peers to accommodate revenue and expenditure pressures and prudent debt management."

Investors are investing in Ontario for a reason: because we're making it happen. We are relying on our economic engine of the economy to support all of Canada. We're the largest net contributor to the federation as well.

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

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Back to the Premier: What the minister failed to mention was how many downgrades we had. That's why we're only at Aa2. The worst part of all this is the Premier has been warned, time and time again, about the consequences of her spend-at-all-costs approach. The Auditor General repeatedly told us that increasing debt interest payments will crowd out the services families rely on. That's why the Liberals have closed hospital beds and fired 1,600 nurses, and that's why 100 front-line health care workers in Sudbury are worried about their jobs this very morning.

The government's lack of financial discipline is exactly why they received a condemnation from Moody's. They can't be trusted. Is this Premier proud that Liberal self-

interests and a desperate attempt to cling to power is hurting Ontario's reputation?

1100

Hon. Charles Sousa: Mr. Speaker, it's exactly because of our fiscal discipline—and we beat our targets year over year the ninth year in a row. We balanced the budget last year, and we have a surplus of \$600 million. Furthermore, we are the leanest government in all of Canada. Our interest on debt is a function of our revenue. It was 15 cents for every dollar when they were in power. Today it's under eight cents.

We will continue to take what steps are necessary to invest, unlike what this member is suggesting. In this budget, we have tremendous investments to provide for health care, public education, social programs and infrastructure spending. The very things that they say we should do, they're voting against. The people of Ontario need a strong economy. We're diversifying that economy. Moody's has affirmed that the province of Ontario is being prudent in our debt management.

EXECUTIVE COMPENSATION

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: My question is for the Premier. Does the Premier believe that \$6 million is an acceptable salary for the CEO of Hydro One?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Energy.

Hon. Glenn Thibeault: Once again, I am pleased to rise and talk to the same question. We recognize that the executive salaries at Hydro One are high compared to the vast majority of Ontario salaries. We remain committed to Hydro One's regulation, accountability and transparency through our government's involvement as a majority shareholder.

The gimmick that we are seeing from the other side, especially from the leader of that party, is going to drive us down to the same mess that we're seeing south of the border. This isn't going to do anything to actually take a single cent off anyone's hydro bills, not one single cent. But you know what did, Mr. Speaker? It was our fair hydro plan. Our fair hydro plan made sure that we reduced rates by 25% on average.

We will continue to put forward policy and not bumper stickers, like the gimmick that they're doing.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary? The member from Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock.

Ms. Laurie Scott: Back to the Premier: Is \$6 million an acceptable salary for the CEO of Hydro One?

Hon. Glenn Thibeault: Mr. Speaker, is voting for 25% reductions for families right across this province something that everyone should do? Yes, they should, and it's this party that did it.

On that side of the House, we used to talk about them as being the party that had no plan. And then, they had a weekend where they brought forward a plan and they were keeping the fair hydro plan. That was something that we thought was great, but they should have voted for it when they had a chance.

But now that plan has disappeared, and they are once again the party that has no plan. The only thing that they

can talk about is Hydro One CEO's salary, and yes, Mr. Speaker, we recognize that executive salaries are high. But when it comes to actually making a difference and taking costs off bills, we reduced those bills, especially in Hydro One areas, by up to 50% because of our action.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary? The member from Lambton–Kent–Middlesex.

Mr. Monte McNaughton: Back to the Premier: It is shocking to see the Liberals defend their six-million-dollar man. How does the Premier defend the salary of the Hydro One CEO?

Hon. Glenn Thibeault: Once again, it's our government that understands that affordability is critical for families and businesses. As I've said before, that's why we launched Ontario's Fair Hydro Plan, reducing rates by 25% on average for all residential consumers, as well as half a million small businesses and farms. Our plan is working.

A recent report by the Environmental Commissioner reconfirmed that Ontario's families and small businesses pay less on average than many other North American jurisdictions. Families in cities like New York, Boston and San Francisco pay more than double the average of Ontario, and consumers in Charlottetown, Regina, Halifax and Moncton are paying more than the Ontario average.

By bringing down prices for customers, we're continuing to increase fairness and create more opportunity for Ontario families. We'll continue to find ways to bring forward policy that helps. They can keep bringing forward bumper-sticker policies.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

M^{me} France Gélinas: Ma question est pour la première ministre, si j'en viens à bout. There is a crisis in Ontario hospitals and the Premier refuses to admit it. Over the last 15 years, it is that government that created this crisis, and after 15 years they are still ignoring it and denying it. The CEO of Lake of the Woods District Hospital said, "We did not receive the average 4.6% increase that was mentioned in the provincial budget. We received significantly less than that."

The Premier needs to admit there is a problem, and she needs to explain to Ontarians from Kenora to King Street why she isn't fixing this crisis. Why is it that the Premier refuses to properly fund our hospitals?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Well, Mr. Speaker, I had the privilege this morning of being at one of the campuses of Sunnybrook, the Holland orthopaedic centre, and reaffirmed our announcement of the near billion-dollar investment in health care that's included in our budget that will specifically go to hospitals to reduce wait times.

I recognize that there's variability across the province, which is exactly why Health Quality Ontario has a Northern Ontario Health Equity Strategy. It's very important. On just about every policy file in Ontario, at one point or another, you will run up against geography, because this is a massive province and the population is

unevenly distributed. That's why having an equity policy is important.

I'll talk more about it in the supplementary, but the member opposite knows that overall, the increase in funding to hospitals in Ontario is 4.6%, and there was variation among hospitals in terms of the increases that they got.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

M^{me} France Gélinas: When the CEO of a hospital comes out publicly and says they are being underfunded, we have a problem. Here's what he said: "We have many unmet needs here. There is a lot to be dealt with. We are hoping that there will be some additional support." Why, for yet another year, is the Premier ignoring the needs of our hospital system?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Speaker, we recognize that there's a need for more investment in hospitals. Let me just talk about the health equity strategy. I'd love to, as the Premier, have a conversation with the CEO of that hospital or any of the CEOs of hospitals around the province, because they are on the front line and we worked with them as we developed our budget. We listened to them and we made the increases that they and the OHA deemed were necessary.

The health equity policy recognizes that there's a need for different strategies in different parts of the province. Last year, for example, we announced \$222 million over three years to support Ontario's first-ever First Nations Health Action Plan, including an additional \$145 million every year, recognizing that there are needs. We also announced investing \$19 million in capital funding to support a facility at Health Sciences North for the Northern Ontario School of Medicine and a new wing in Thunder Bay to consolidate specialized—

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

M^{me} France Gélinas: The Liberals have had 15 long years to see the crisis in our hospitals coming. They've had 15 long years to step up and address the aging of the population, a change that we could see coming for decades. Now, with the countdown at 50 days to go, they're still pretending that the problem does not exist.

The good news for people is that hope is coming. New Democrats are going to end hallway medicine. Why did the Premier let this crisis happen in our hospitals?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Speaker, as I said yesterday to the member opposite, we invested in increased funding to Health Sciences North, the health system in the jurisdiction that she and our terrific member from Sudbury represent. We increased over two years that funding by \$10 million. That is a substantial increase for Health Sciences North.

We have recognized that across the province there's a need for an increase in funding, but that builds on the investments that we have made every year. There has been a huge investment in home care. The reality is that more people want to stay in their homes. We need to make sure that those supports are in place. We need to make sure that acute care beds continue to be supported. We increased the

acute care beds in the province by 1,200 as a result of the flu surge this winter, Mr. Speaker, and we will move to make those beds permanent.

We recognize that there's more that needs to be done.

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LONG-TERM CARE

Ms. Cindy Forster: My question is to the Premier.

When a person needs long-term care, they deserve to know that they will be safe. They deserve to be treated with dignity and with respect. But yesterday, we learned there's a home in Thunder Bay that has 44—yes, I repeat: 44—non-compliance orders.

The Liberals have been in power for 15 long years. How did the Premier let this happen?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: As I just said in my previous answer, more people want to stay in their homes. What that has meant is that there has been substantial investment in home care.

We have also renovated, have upgraded thousands of long-term-care beds across the province. We are building more. We are in the process of building 5,000 new long-term-care beds right now.

We're also looking at and funding models like what are called naturally occurring retirement communities, where there is a group of seniors who are already living in an apartment—and there's an example in Kingston, Oasis I believe it's called, where these seniors are living together. They want to stay there. If they have some medical support, like a personal support worker, they can stay and age in place.

Mr. Speaker, there's a range of supports that we have put in place. We recognize there's more to be done.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Cindy Forster: What about staffing existing long-term-care beds?

Records show that at Bethammi Nursing Home, many of the residents were given only a single bath during the month of January—one bath in a month per resident.

Seniors are wise. They've lived through a lot, and we should be treasuring their contributions. These are our parents. These are the people who built Ontario into what it is today. New Democrats will immediately fix that problem. We'll find and fix with an inquiry in our long-term-care system so that we can start to fix these problems, which have developed over the last 15 years.

Why did the Premier allow our long-term-care system to get like this?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: The member opposite referenced a specific situation in Thunder Bay. I know that the member for Atikokan is going to be meeting with folks on the ground there tomorrow.

The reality is that in terms of long-term care in this province, all long-term-care homes are overseen by a rigorous inspection system, a regulatory framework that includes an annual inspection to ensure compliance. We have reinforced and increased that oversight. All the results from every inspection are posted online and in the homes themselves.

I recognize that we have to be vigilant. These are some of the most vulnerable people in our society, which is why we have increased the vigilance, increased the oversight. We will continue to work with long-term-care providers to make sure that those are enforced.

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

Ms. Cindy Forster: Those 44 non-compliance issues didn't happen overnight.

Staff at Bethammi Nursing Home are dedicated and caring. They're doing their best and they're being worked off their feet. They are understaffed. Sometimes it takes more than an hour for a resident to have a call answered in their room and for the staff to respond.

The stories we've heard out of Bethammi are heart-breaking. They're almost too hard to tell. Everyone feels really bad about what is happening here at Bethammi. When did the Premier learn about those problems in our long-term-care system, and why hasn't she fixed them?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Mr. Speaker, as I said, we have over some time been taking action to support our growing and aging population and to reinforce and increase the vigilance in the long-term-care system. We recognize that these are some of the most vulnerable people in our society, and they deserve to have every care possible.

We will continue to make sure that homes are compliant. Our members work with local homes, but there is a system of oversight and a system of inspection. I think it's very legitimate that there would be questions asked in a situation like this. Those questions need answers, and that's exactly what the system, the framework of oversight, is in place to do: to answer those questions and determine why such a situation would have arisen.

GOVERNMENT SPENDING

Mr. Jim Wilson: My question is to the Premier. The Premier held another campaign-style event this morning, this time at a Toronto hospital, and she's heading downtown later today for another platform announcement.

This egregious abuse of taxpayers' money must come to an end. How much are these campaign-style events costing taxpayers today?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I understand why the member opposite would focus on that and not the substance of the announcements that we are making relevant to our budget, because we're making a nearly billion-dollar investment in hospitals to decrease wait times when we are already leading the country in terms of wait times.

This afternoon, I'll be talking—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I will give everyone credit: We got this far without having to go to warnings. I'd like to see if we could do it all the way. So let's do that. Right?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: This afternoon, I'll be talking about climate change with Michael Bloomberg,

and climate change in the context of corporate responsibility. I am quite sure that's a subject that the member opposite really doesn't want to touch. He doesn't want to talk about climate change and doesn't want to talk about reigning in corporate pollution.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Jim Wilson: Back to the Premier: Even if the Premier wants to pretend otherwise, she is clearly campaigning on the taxpayers' dime. It's shady and it's unethical, and it needs to stop—

Interjections.

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

Mr. Jim Wilson: Withdraw, Mr. Speaker.

Once again, the Liberals had ministers out this morning using taxpayers' money for campaign-style photo ops. Shame on you, Premier.

Will the Liberal Party do the right thing and pay back the taxpayers for these campaign-style events? You're out talking about your budget. You told us that was your platform. These are campaign-style events, and they've got to stop.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Government House leader.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: Thanks to the member opposite for highlighting that ministers are doing their jobs by being out in communities and talking about things that are important to Ontarians. We're proud to do our jobs, and we'll continue to do our jobs.

But it's kind of evident that the party opposite and Doug Ford are panicked. They are panicked because they are worried that people are going to find out that they are going to cut OHIP+, that they are going to cut expansions to OHIP+, that they are going to cut significant investments to bring wait times down, that they are going to cut supports for students through OSAP, where 225,000 students are going to colleges and universities without paying any tuition fees.

They are worried that these important policies that are making a difference in people's lives—they are going to cut those things, and they don't want people to know about those things.

LABOUR DISPUTE

Ms. Cindy Forster: My question is to the Premier. Some 3,000 York University faculty are still on strike, taking a stand against insecure academic jobs and chronic underfunding of the university post-secondary system—even though the Liberal government is not. Tens of thousands of York University students now face a real threat of not graduating as they have planned for in their lives, careers and futures, which are now uncertain.

I received a letter from a nursing student at York. She has been told by the university that they need to make up all their practical hours in order to graduate, which is impossible as the strike drags on, and they run the real risk of losing their placement. What does the Premier have to

say to this student about why their graduation is now in jeopardy?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Advanced Education and Skills Development.

Hon. Mitzie Hunter: This situation is certainly very challenging. It's challenging particularly for the students at York University. Since the beginning of the strike, I made it very, very clear that our priority is on the students, on getting both sides to come together to reach a fair resolution to both sides on this issue so that we can put our students at the forefront and bring them back to the learning that they're there to do.

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It's disappointing that an agreement has not yet been reached. The Ministry of Labour has provided support all the way through this process and, this week, appointed a commissioner to talk to both sides. A number of meetings have already been held. We need to get both sides talking and looking at a resolution.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

Ms. Cindy Forster: Back to the Premier: Another York student contacted me yesterday. He's a political science major, and he's concerned that, for the second time in their four-year program, a dispute has threatened their ability to actually graduate.

One side has been at the table and has been there for the last six weeks; the publicly funded administration at York University has not been at the table.

The government appointed an industrial relations commission to examine the outstanding issues in the dispute. But having the lowest per-student funding, I think, in Canada is part of the dispute in post-secondary education under this Liberal government.

The Premier can still apply pressure to the publicly funded administration of York University to tell them to get back to the table, because it takes two sides at the table to actually reach an agreement.

Hon. Mitzie Hunter: Our focus and our priority are on the students. York University has—

Miss Monique Taylor: It's on yourself.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Carry on.

Hon. Mitzie Hunter: York University has remained open and students are attending classes. This is a very challenging situation. I've connected with both sides multiple times. It's a very, very tough situation. We respect the collective bargaining process. We are calling on both sides in this situation to think about a compromise, put the needs of the students first, get back to the table and resolve this issue so that it's fair and equitable to both sides.

ELECTRICITY SUPPLY

Ms. Ann Hoggarth: My question is for the Minister of Energy. In 2014, Ontario signed a memorandum of understanding with Quebec regarding electricity trade. In 2016, we announced an expanded seven-year deal that will help make electricity in Ontario more affordable, clean and reliable. This deal was beneficial for both provinces

because it helped ensure electricity supply for when it was needed most. In Quebec, they need electricity during the coldest winter days due to their use of electric heat; in Ontario, we need it at the height of the summer. This MOU helped to ensure both our provinces had the supply we needed at those times. Just as importantly, the imports of cheap hydroelectricity from Quebec will offset reliance on natural gas power plants, reducing Ontario's greenhouse gas emissions by one million tonnes each year.

Today the Financial Accountability Officer released a report on this deal. Minister, can you please update us on the findings?

Hon. Glenn Thibeault: I want to thank the member for that question and, of course, for her tireless work for her constituents. I also want to thank the Financial Accountability Officer for his report and the analysis of our electricity trade agreement with Quebec.

As the member noted, electricity demand peaks at different times in our province. That means there is the opportunity to coordinate our electricity systems in ways that are beneficial to both provinces. Through the expanded electricity trade in this deal, our province is set to import up to two terawatts of clean hydroelectric power from Quebec annually; that's enough power to power the entire city of Kitchener for a year, for example.

The report confirms what we've always said about this trade agreement: It strengthens system reliability and cost effectiveness for both provinces. The FAO report outlines that this deal will reduce system costs in our province by \$38 million over the life of the deal. This is a savings both to ratepayers across the province—and I look forward to talking more about this in the supplementary.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

Ms. Ann Hoggarth: Thank you to the minister for the response.

An additional part of this deal is an agreement to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Over the past 15 years, Ontario has become a leader in the global fight against climate change. Just last year, our electricity system was over 95% free of emissions that cause climate change. This is due to the nearly \$70 billion that has been invested to modernize the system since 2003, which included the elimination of dirty, coal-fired electricity generation.

However, we must continue to work hard on reducing our carbon footprint. Just two days ago, Governor Jerry Brown warned us what could happen if polluters are given a free pass, something the official opposition wants to do.

Speaker, through you to the minister: Could the Minister of Energy please explain how this electricity trade agreement reduces greenhouse gas emissions?

Hon. Glenn Thibeault: The member is right in pointing out that Ontario has become a leader in the fight against climate change. Just last week, the province's Environmental Commissioner pointed that out: "Replacing coal-fired electricity with nuclear, renewables, conservation and natural gas has cleaned the air, reduced greenhouse gas emissions, and increased electrical grid

capacity and resilience." She also said, "Taking coal out of electricity dramatically reduced Ontario's greenhouse gas emissions, and has improved air quality and public health."

Now the FAO's report confirms that the trade agreement will result in Quebec imports continuing to replace 2.3 terawatt hours of natural gas generation each year and reduces GHG emissions by almost one million tonnes per year. That's some real action on climate change.

Our government is continuing to ensure that our electricity is clean, reliable and affordable.

ACCESS TO INFORMATION

Mr. Randy Hillier: To the Premier: This Premier likes to talk the talk about fairness, but when it comes to actions she certainly doesn't walk the walk. The latest example is this government arguing against transparency in our tribunals. The Premier is using the public—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock. The chief government whip is warned. We're now in warnings. Thank you.

Mr. Randy Hillier: Thank you. The latest example is this government arguing against transparency in our tribunals. The Premier is using the public purse to fight a court battle with the Toronto Star, who is challenging the secrecy of our tribunals that keep adjudicative decisions and records—which are public property, paid for by the taxpayer—from the public. This legal battle is the epitome of an old and tired government. They are using our money to fight against releasing our records.

Abusing the public purse in order to keep the tribunal's failures hidden and secret behind closed doors breaks a fundamental tenet that justice must be seen to be done. Speaker, what is fair about that?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Attorney General.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: I thank the member for the question. I think, Speaker, as you heard, the member referenced a court case that is ongoing. It would be highly inappropriate for me to discuss and debate the merits of that case in the House.

What I will say, broadly, is that of course we very much value transparency and to make sure that that information is available as readily as possible, but one also has to be mindful of privacy and confidentiality as well. When one is looking at records that may be before courts or tribunals, there are considerations around privacy and confidentiality.

As I said, this matter is before the courts, and we will leave it up to the courts to make a determination.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

Mr. Randy Hillier: Again to the Premier: It is this government who is arguing in the court. They're arguing that tribunals that adjudicate disputes and impose heavy fines, punishments and sanctions, and can revoke people's licences and accreditations and take away their livelihoods, are not really courts. Tribunals such as the

Human Rights Tribunal, the OLRB, the LAT and dozens more have both the form and function of our courts but none of the safeguards of impartiality, openness and due process.

The Premier's willingness to fight Canada's largest circulation newspaper in court to hide the records and decisions of these public matters raises red flags. It's time for this Premier to mandate tribunals to make their records open and accessible.

Why is this Premier working to frustrate and distort the basic principles of an open court, which is essential to our judicial system?

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Hon. Yasir Naqvi: The member opposite very well knows that this is not a matter to be litigated in the House. This is a matter that is before the courts; that is the most appropriate place for it to be heard. Speaker, as you have noted in the past, and members know, the sub judice rules require all MPPs not to engage in making comments about matters that are before the courts.

As the Attorney General, it is my responsibility to ensure that the administration of justice in our province is independent of any partisan concerns. Therefore, I'm not going to comment on the specifics of this case, but I'll say that transparency and accountability is a very fundamental principle that the government holds very dear to us. One also has to be mindful around confidentiality and the privacy of information as well.

HEALTH CARE

Mr. Wayne Gates: My question is to the Premier. Last night, in my riding of Niagara Falls, I hosted a health care town hall with my colleague from Nickel Belt. You can say there isn't a crisis in health care; well, we had people talk about issues like long-term care, mental health access, hallway medicine and so many other problems. I can assure you there is a crisis.

I would like the Premier to respond to one story. One speaker told us about a young girl who was struggling to get mental health supports. The wait-lists are so long that she finds herself going to the emergency department for help, only to be discharged back onto the wait-list.

Speaker, 12,000 young people just like her are on wait-lists for mental health support. With the resources we have in this province, how has the Premier and the Liberal government allowed this to happen to our young people?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Mr. Speaker, I am very sympathetic to—and I use the example of—families with children who are looking for mental health supports all the time. I recognize, and I think we all can recognize in this House, as a society, we have had to and do have to up our game in terms of supports for mental health.

There have been wonderful campaigns in the last decade that have shone a light on mental health and have raised awareness of mental health. Bell Let's Talk is one of the examples of that. There are members in each one of

our caucuses who have worked very, very hard in their own communities and across the province to raise awareness about mental health challenges.

The reality is that 25 years ago, as a society, we didn't acknowledge mental health as as much of a challenge as it is. While we have been building in supports in school boards and in community services, there is more that has to be done. That's why we're putting billions of dollars into mental health care as part of our budget.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Wayne Gates: Back to the Premier: I can tell you, last night the stories were shocking and there were tears everywhere, including mine. At our health care town hall last night, we heard from an individual whose grandmother was in hospital. She was waiting for a bed in long-term care. She needed to be in long-term care, and while waiting in the hospital for a long-term-care bed, she was being charged by the Niagara Health System. She received a bill for over \$3,000.

Will the Premier explain why seniors in our province are getting charged thousands of dollars for a stay in a publicly funded hospital simply because her Liberal government has created a shortage of long-term-care beds?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I would have to have the details of that situation; I don't know the details of that situation.

Certainly, we recognize that if someone needs long-term care—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Premier?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: —then they have every right to get that care.

What we do know is that in Ontario right now, there is a range of supports that's needed. We are building more long-term-care beds; we're upgrading thousands; we're building 5,000 new and then 30,000 over the next 10 years. We recognize that there is more that needs to be done. But there are also transition beds that are needed. We need to make sure that people get the home care that they need. There's a whole range of supports in which we are investing as part of our budget.

SPORTS FUNDING

Mrs. Cristina Martins: My question is to the Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport. This past weekend, the Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Sport held their sport symposium in Toronto. The theme of this year's symposium was "From Playground to Podium." The idea behind this theme was to explore ways in which the sport sector can engage children and youth and keep them involved in sport throughout their lives.

As a soccer mom to André and David, I know—and we all know—that children who participate in organized sport experience positive benefits in all aspects of their lives, not just physical health. Through conversations and feedback that our government received during this year's sport symposium, we will continue to build on the strides made to encourage children and youth to get moving.

Mr. Speaker, through you to the minister: Can you tell the members of this House what we have already done to support participation in sport?

Hon. Daiene Vernile: I want to thank the member for Davenport, who is also a fabulous soccer mom, for that question. The sport symposium was very special. We relaunched the Ontario Sport Awards. Ontario's children and youth need to know that they are entering into a system that's always going to support them.

Last year alone, we released the Advancing Opportunities for Women and Girls in Sport action plan, giving women and girls equal access to opportunities in sport, and through Rowan's Law we passed groundbreaking concussion safety legislation to protect athletes. We have also supported a number of high-profile sporting competitions, such as the 2018 Ontario Winter Games in Orillia. Speaker, I attended the opening ceremonies, and, let me tell you, those kids were really pumped to be there. The games had over 3,000 participants. They competed in about 25 different sports.

Our commitments to boosting the quality of life for people show that the strides that we've made are going to make life better for people for years to come in the future.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mrs. Cristina Martins: Thank you to the minister for the response. I'm sure that my girls from Girls' Government here today are happy that we did release the advancing women and girls in sport action plan.

It's amazing to see that over the last year alone, your ministry has supported 24 events through the Sport Hosting Program, a program that provides funding to help applicants deliver national and international amateur sport events in Ontario. These events promote tourism and boost local economies by providing major sport events to local communities. I think it's safe to say that our hard work is paying off for Ontario's athletes, but there's always more to do and there is always room for improvement.

Mr. Speaker, through you to the minister, can the minister speak to other programs in place to support an active lifestyle?

Hon. Daiene Vernile: Thanks to the member from Davenport. I've got good news for the young girls who are sitting up there in the visitors' gallery today. In the past year, we invested \$50 million to promote participation in sport and to build capacity. We've also committed to continual investment in Ontario's after-school programs, which provide 22,000 children and youth with opportunities to access sport, recreation, nutrition and personal wellness.

Just this past weekend, we presented the Game ON progress report at our annual sport symposium. Our sport plan offers athletes, coaches and officials a chance to excel in sport, and it supports 60 sport organizations all across the province.

We are committed to boosting active living, and that's why we're also investing over \$90 million this year in cycling alone to build more bike lanes and trails right

across the province. I want to highlight, Speaker, that we've gone a step further in introducing the toughest road safety legislation in North America, keeping cyclists, pedestrians and other vulnerable road users safe.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Mr. Bill Walker: My question is to the Premier. Let me read you a passage from a recent Toronto Life article. They "discovered that her bed was in what Sunnybrook staff called the 'orange zone'—essentially a holding area for patients when no rooms are available. Her bed was pushed up against a wall, with the IV pole and other paraphernalia wedged in beside her. [He] had nowhere to sit, so he stood awkwardly next to her until a nurse kindly brought him a chair. There was a curtain, but no switch to turn off the lights at night. That location would be [the patient's] home for the next 19 hours."

Premier, is that a health care system that you're proud of?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: As I have said many times, we have recognized and we have been investing in hospitals: \$500 million in new money in our budget last year; this year, \$822 million. We recognize, as the population ages, there are more concerns. People are sicker. There are more of them who need care. That's exactly why, in our budget, we have made such a significant investment.

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We're investing more than an additional \$5 billion over the next three years to provide better access and more services in Ontario. What that includes is \$2.1 billion for better and faster access to mental health and addiction services. We're going to expand OHIP+ to make prescriptions completely free for everyone 65 and over. They already are free for everyone up to their 25th birthday. And we're reducing wait times by investing an additional, as I said, \$822 million, and that's the single largest investment in hospitals in almost a decade.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

Mr. Bill Walker: Back to the Premier: Premier, let's not forget you wasted \$8 billion on eHealth and there's nothing to show for that.

This government, your government, has had 15 years to fix this, and instead we get this. You've made things worse.

Let me read you another paragraph: "Thirty-eight hours had elapsed since" the patient "had arrived, so" her husband "was surprised to find that she hadn't been moved into a room but was instead in a hallway. She had a dressing on her right arm that stretched from her bicep down to her fingers, and another on her left arm that went from elbow to fingers. There she was, lying in the hallway of one of Canada's premier hospitals, still waiting for surgery."

Does the Premier really think 38 hours is acceptable to wait in a hallway? Is this really the Ontario health care system the Premier wants to leave behind?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I guess I understand why the member opposite would want to talk down a terrific institution like Sunnybrook, but I was at Sunnybrook—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound is warned.

Finish, please.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I was at Sunnybrook this morning. Of course, Mr. Speaker, when there are specific instances like this—and I don't know the details of this—then they're unacceptable, absolutely. But the reality is that there are remarkable things happening at Sunnybrook and at hospitals around the province.

What we know is that the \$822 million that we are investing as part of our budget will provide 26,000 additional MRI operating hours, 14,000 more surgical and medical procedures, 3,000 more cardiac procedures.

Mr. Speaker, we know that these investments are needed, but the front-line workers across this province are already doing remarkable work for the people of Ontario.

EMPLOYMENT STANDARDS

Ms. Jennifer K. French: My question is to the Premier.

Earlier this week, I was disappointed when the minister refused to commit to ending the unfair limits to auto workers' leave days. Again, I say this isn't right and it isn't fair. Auto workers deserve the same employment standards and rights as every other worker in this province.

I have since learned that not only are cleaners in auto plants finding their job titles re-designated as "auto workers" so that their leave days can be clawed back, but there also have been employers across this province who have taken their cue from the government and have issued notices that they will now only allow seven personal emergency leave days. These are employers who had previously been giving their workers 10 days.

Ontarians deserve security in the workplace. We should not be competing in a race to the bottom.

Once again, I ask: Will you commit to immediately ending this unfair exemption for auto workers?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Labour.

Hon. Kevin Daniel Flynn: Thank you for that question.

Speaker, on January 1, 2017, we went out and we talked to the industry stakeholders. We talked to others who were engaged in auto, organized labour, business—anybody who was involved in the auto sector in the province of Ontario, which is very healthy, which is very competitive and has received tremendous support from this government and, from time to time, other members of the House.

What we put in place was a pilot project. We wanted to look at the auto sector and we wanted to examine if there was a different way of providing personal emergency leave that made sense and took into account the

competitive nature and other unique parts of the auto sector. We've been out there for about a year with the pilot project. We continue to talk to those who are involved with this issue. It is a pilot project, and you have my commitment that when we examine it, we're going to do a very thorough examination.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

Ms. Jennifer K. French: Calling something a pilot project isn't enough to smooth over the fact that it's still discriminatory.

Again to the Premier: If you won't do the right thing, then I will. This afternoon, I am going to be joined by members of Unifor, and I will table my private member's bill, the Fairness for the Auto Sector Act. My bill will do what both the Liberals and Conservatives voted against during committee for Bill 148. It will ensure that every worker in Ontario will have access to the same minimum number of leave days, without exception. My bill will close the loophole that the Liberals have created.

Premier, I've done the heavy lifting of drafting the bill. Will you do the right thing and ensure that my bill, the Fairness for the Auto Sector Act, becomes law before this session ends?

Hon. Kevin Daniel Flynn: Thank you for the supplementary. Just last week, the Minister of Transportation and I met with Jerry Dias from Unifor. We met with a number of unionized members of the auto sector and we met with the non-unionized auto workers on this issue. I believe we're all on the same page right now, Speaker, but now is the time to evaluate the efficacy of the pilot project. We've got to see if it works, to see if it needs to be changed.

I'm proud—

Interjection.

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

Finish, please.

Hon. Kevin Daniel Flynn: Speaker, I'm proud to announce today that we've appointed Buzz Hargrove, the former leader of the CAW, and Stacey Allerton, former vice-president of human resources at Ford Motor Company and the former director of labour affairs for Ford in the United States. But I find it passing strange that when Bill 148 was passing through the House—

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

Hon. Kevin Daniel Flynn: —there was not a peep from the NDP on this issue.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The minister knows that when I stand, he sits.

New question.

CHILDREN'S TREATMENT CENTRES

Mr. John Fraser: My question is to the Minister of Children and Youth Services. Minister, children's treatment centres provide rehabilitation services for children and youth with special needs and their families. There are

21 of these centres across the province, providing services to more than 81,000 children and youth with special needs.

Last month, I was very proud to join the Premier at the Children's Hospital of Eastern Ontario to announce our commitment to the Ottawa Children's Treatment Centre.

I know that last week the government announced in Oakville the opening of a new ErinoakKids facility. Minister, can you share with the House the details of this announcement?

Hon. Michael Coteau: I want to take a moment just to recognize the advocacy and work from the member from Ottawa South and his continued work to support the children's hospital in Ottawa.

I joined the Premier, the Minister of Labour, the treasurer and the Minister of Education at Erinoaks earlier this week. We got to meet some incredible families, and I'm very happy that this government has invested over \$163 million to complete this project. Mr. Speaker, this is an expansion doubling the space to over 300,000 square feet, and the footprint will take place in Mississauga, Brampton and Oakville.

The Minister of Labour, the MPP for Oakville, has been advocating for this project for years, and I want to take an opportunity to thank him for really building a better facility in his community to serve many families across that region.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. John Fraser: Thanks to the minister for that response. Speaker, centres like Erin Oaks and the Ottawa Children's Treatment Centre allow children with cognitive and physical disabilities to get the support they need in their home communities. I know that we will continue to support children's treatment centres and children and youth with special needs.

While it is incredibly important to invest in the centres themselves, we also need to invest in high-quality services. Speaker, through you to the minister: Could he tell us more about our government's investments in special needs services?

Hon. Michael Coteau: Last week, when I joined members of this government at Erin Oaks, I got to witness first-hand the high-quality, coordinated, integrated services that are developed through Ontario's Special Needs Strategy to help connect children to services that they need as early as possible.

My ministry is investing over \$630 million in services this year alone. The investments include almost \$320 million to autism services, almost \$120 million for children's treatment rehabilitation services, over \$100 million to complex special needs and \$85 million for healthy-child-development programs.

In our 2018 budget, we're allocating more than \$300 million in new funding over three years for an additional 2,000 new teachers, specialized support staff and educational workers.

Mr. Speaker, this is how we make a difference for Ontarians: by making sure that we add services, not cuts.

1150

DISASTER RELIEF

Mr. Rick Nicholls: My question is to the Minister of Municipal Affairs. The recent ice storm had a devastating effect on cities and towns throughout southwestern Ontario. My riding of Chatham-Kent-Essex was especially hit hard. Media reports describe strong winds and heavy rain, which sent huge waves crashing in on the shore of Lake Erie in the Chatham-Kent, Point Pelee and Leamington areas.

I've already spoken to John Paterson, mayor of Leamington, who has confirmed the devastation. There was breakwall damage and shoreline erosion. Roads were completely washed out. Water levels were so high in the Wheatley Harbour that fishing boats ended up on top of the docks, and the boat launch was completely destroyed. Residents are saying that the ice storm and flooding are the worst disaster they've seen in the past several decades.

Minister, have any of your officials yet visited the area to assess the damage?

Hon. Bill Mauro: Thank you to the member for the question.

I first want to acknowledge the work of the first responders. I know the Minister of CSCS has been involved in providing a coordinating function to ensure that any support that's needed from first responders can be provided and helped to be coordinated. Also, natural resources and forestry, I know, is providing a monitoring function when it comes to these sorts of flooding incidents.

What I would say directly to the member in response to his question is that, in the first instance, this sounds like it is more about municipal infrastructure, not so much about flooding in people's homes, although that is yet to be determined with final certainty. But because of that, we know that the municipal crews are on the ground doing their work. They will ultimately at some point provide information back to us as a ministry, and then we will determine if we will activate our program.

I would add to that that we have changed the program. We have lowered the threshold for municipal infrastructure to be eligible under the new program from 4% to 3% of own purpose tax revenue. So there's a possibility, based on their information, that it may be activated.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Rick Nicholls: Back to the minister—and I appreciate that response.

More than 35,000 hydro customers were without power over the weekend. Property has been destroyed. Houses have been ruined. Hydro One crews worked around the clock to restore power. Our first responders—and I appreciate your comment regarding them—rescued many residents stranded due to flooding and road erosion. They were responsible for saving lives and preventing serious injuries. I want to thank them personally, as you did as well. But as I mentioned, the damage has been severe.

Minister, your ministry promised to help in the last bout of flooding in southwestern Ontario. That was a few months ago, as you may recall. I truly appreciated your visit to the riding of Chatham–Kent–Essex.

Minister, you and I need to work together. It's not about us; it's about the constituents in the riding. My question is, simply, what specifically will you do to help us out this time?

Hon. Bill Mauro: In addition to the municipal portion, I know that there's been a phone line set up for residents to phone in and advise of any impacts on their own homes. That information will come to us, and we'll determine whether or not our DRAO team visits the city to determine if there have been any personal circumstances.

As the member states, this is about people. This is an emergency. This is an acute situation. It's a very, very serious issue, but I cannot help but make the comment that at some point, there has to be some signal from the other side and you and your leader that you're going to get it and you're going to buy in that things have changed on the ground.

I'll give you some stats: From 2005 to 2010, 17 declared disasters requiring \$8 million of provincial assistance; 2010 to 2015, 43 disasters requiring \$36 million; and it continues to increase in severity.

Your leader is taking a position on this file. He seems to believe or imply that he's not taking it seriously at all. This is about people. We're taking it seriously. We have programs to respond. I would hope that you'd buy in on this.

ACCESSIBILITY FOR PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

Miss Monique Taylor: My question is to the Premier. A report released today by the AODA Alliance contains some shameful facts. Ontarians with disabilities still face too many barriers when they apply for jobs, try to access public transit, go to school, access hospitals or try and shop or go out to eat—activities that many of us take for granted. Worse, there was little or no enforcement of the laws that would ensure this access.

In the five years since the law passed, 57% of businesses have not even filed the required accessibility reports. Only two fines have ever been levied for non-compliance. What is the Premier going to do to ensure that accessibility laws in Ontario are followed?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister responsible for accessibility.

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: We know that Ontario is a global leader when it comes to accessibility—Canada's first jurisdiction to adopt accessibility standards. We remain committed to our goal to have an accessible province by 2025. Although there have always been resources dedicated to compliance and enforcement, to respond to my expanded mandate, we reorganized the Accessibility Directorate of Ontario to reflect and create a dedicated branch on compliance and enforcement.

I am pleased to say, Speaker, that compliance reporting rates continue to increase. Around 24,000 businesses completed their 2017 accessibility compliance reports by this past December. That represents a 20% increase over the previous reporting deadline, and more than 6,000 businesses filed their compliance reports for the very first time this year. We're also experiencing increased reporting rates amongst businesses and not-for-profits, and we will continue to work with them to make Ontario accessible.

VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Point of order, the member from Haldimand–Norfolk.

Mr. Toby Barrett: Point of order, Speaker. History teacher Ron Smith has brought his grade 12 history class here from Simcoe high school, my former high school and a school named after Ontario's first Lieutenant Governor, John Graves Simcoe.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Welcome. The member from Oshawa, on a point of order.

Ms. Jennifer K. French: I am happy to welcome to the Legislature Emile Nabbout, from Unifor 195 in Windsor, and Joel Smith, from Oshawa Unifor Local 222, here this afternoon for my press conference. Welcome to Queen's Park.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Davenport, on a point of order.

Mrs. Cristina Martins: Speaker, earlier this morning I introduced all the girls from Girls' Government, but I did not introduce Daniel Rebelo, who is here as well to join the group of girls for a visit at Queen's Park. Welcome, Daniel.

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

The House recessed from 1157 to 1500.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

PIERRE ROY

Mr. Jim McDonell: In my riding of Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry, there are many great volunteers whose hard work and dedication make life so much better for so many. Pierre Roy is a great example of someone who has contributed countless hours to the community. He just recently received the Governor General's Sovereign's Medal for Volunteers.

In returning to the community, Pierre took no time to start on his long list of community initiatives. In 1993, he founded the Lancaster Antique Car Club, where he raised funds for park and community centre upgrades. As a member of the Royal Canadian Legion in Lancaster, he worked with all levels of government to initiate a number of projects, including the relocation and upgrading of the

Lancaster cenotaph and the upgrade and extension of the Lancaster Legion building itself. He currently is in the final stages of the establishment of an Afghan war memorial that required the purchasing of land and securing of a retired LAV III from the Canadian military.

Despite the many long hours involved in these projects, Pierre also found time to volunteer with the St. Lawrence Valley Agricultural Society, which hosts the Williamstown Fair—Canada’s oldest fair—and served as its president in 2015 and 2016. Pierre was awarded the 2008 South Glengarry Citizen of the Year and, in 2014, the Royal Canadian Legion life membership award.

It’s people like Pierre and his wife and able assistant, Linda, who make such a difference in our community. To Pierre and Linda, congratulations and thanks from the residents of Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry.

ATHOLL STEWART

Mr. Percy Hatfield: I want to tell you about a good buddy of mine who passed away recently. His name is Atholl Stewart. He was a retired educator.

At one time, we lived across the street from each other. Just after Gale and I moved in, there was a knock at the door. I go, and there’s this big guy standing there. He says, “Welcome to the neighbourhood. My name is Atholl Stewart. I drink rye and lime rickey.” I say, “Well, come on in. I know I have some rye, but I’m not sure about the lime rickey.” He says, “Well, don’t worry about it this time; I’ll drink whatever you have.” That began a friendship that lasted more than 35 years.

Atholl had a brother, Dr. Ed Stewart. He was Bill Davis’s deputy minister and he served as secretary of cabinet from 1976 to 1985. They would sometimes plan a political visit to Windsor, coincidentally when the Jays were playing the Tigers. I got to go to one of those games with them at Tiger Stadium, and some kid named John Tory came with us as well.

Atholl’s wife, Maureen, is a McCoy, so we had the Hatfields and the McCoy’s living across the street from each other.

My wife, Gale, doesn’t drink, so I put in my will that I was leaving my bar and all of its contents to Atholl. When we moved around the corner, I gave him my bar—I kept the contents. Atholl really liked a good single malt scotch, especially mine.

He loved to golf, and he cheered for the Glasgow Rangers. He always voted Conservative until I ran for the NDP.

Speaker, I loved the guy. I miss him dearly. I have his photo up in my office and on my bar at home. My heart goes out to Maureen, Jim, Chrissy, Brad, Sarah, Kate, Christopher, Aunt Helen and all the McCoy’s.

GEARY AVENUE

Mrs. Cristina Martins: It gives me great pleasure to rise today in the House to highlight the recent designation

of Geary Avenue in my riding of Davenport as the “coolest restaurant strip you’ve never heard of” by Toronto Star columnist Amy Pataki.

The Geary Avenue strip is where old world meets new world, with a variety of local restaurants guaranteed to make foodies far and wide want to flock to the great riding of Davenport.

Located north of Dupont Street between Ossington Avenue and Dufferin Street, Geary Avenue offers a range of delectable eats bound to satisfy any food craving, from Porta Nova to Meta dos Leitões or North of Brooklyn, from artisanal pasta at Famiglia Baldassarre to craft beer at Blood Brothers Brewery, or Nova Era Bakery for some delicious pastéis de nata—Portuguese custard tarts—just to name a few.

I am so proud to represent a riding as diverse as Davenport. Our community’s strength is the variety and richness of our multiculturalism, which can be seen at every street corner in the clothing, music and foods that have given Davenport its increasing notoriety.

Geary Avenue is the perfect example of what happens when you have an open and inclusive environment that celebrates the best of what the world has to offer in one walkable strip, now deemed the hippest street in Toronto.

I encourage everyone to visit Geary Avenue to enjoy for themselves the best that Davenport has to offer.

ORGAN DONATION

Mr. Norm Miller: April is Be a Donor month in Ontario. I want to recognize the communities in my riding which are always high on the list of organ donation registration rates, and one individual who has tirelessly advocated for organ donation in her community.

Again this year, Parry Sound has the highest percentage of registered organ donors in Ontario, at 55%. Close by, 52% of Bracebridge residents are registered organ donors, with 49% in Huntsville and 47% in Gravenhurst. The average across Ontario is 32%. That is getting better; it’s up from 27% in 2015.

The high numbers in my riding are in part due to the efforts of Sandra Holdsworth. Sandra received a liver transplant in 1997 and has spent some 21 years since promoting organ donation. Sandra founded the Muskoka and Simcoe County Gift of Life associations and has served on the provincial and national organizations. In recognition of her work, Sandra is one of nine people who have received the Trillium Gift of Life Network Champion award. I agree: She is a champion.

I saw Sandra on Friday at the Bracebridge vigil for Humboldt. Twenty-one-year-old Logan Boulet, one of the victims of the Humboldt Broncos tragedy, was an organ donor. Six people received his organs, and as a result of the media coverage, more Canadians have registered to be organ donors.

But it shouldn’t take a tragedy like that to inspire people to register. Mr. Speaker, I encourage all Ontarians to help end the wait. Register at beadonor.ca.

NORTHERN RAIL SERVICE

Mr. John Vanthof: It was a sad day in 2012, just before Thanksgiving, when this Liberal government killed the only passenger train in northeastern Ontario, the Northlander. It was an incredibly sad day. They tried to divest or give away the whole ONTC. Northerners united to stop them, but they still slipped that train by.

But an election is coming up, and this government is going to be gone. We have committed to put \$25 million a year into a northern rail transportation strategy, to bring back passenger rail service to northeastern Ontario. One thing we are—

Interjection.

Mr. John Vanthof: I'm being heckled here by the Conservatives.

The member from Algoma–Manitoulin and myself are very proud. We're going to be driving to Sault Ste. Marie tonight because they're going to be having a conference on passenger rail tomorrow. We're going to be so happy and so proud to be able to announce and talk to them about how to reconnect the north, the northeast, the mid-north and the northwest to the rest of the province.

I commit that there is light at the end of the tunnel, and for northern Ontario and for passenger rail, it's a train.

HILLCREST HIGH SCHOOL CANCER DRIVE

Mr. John Fraser: On the evening of April 25, Hillcrest High School in my riding will be hosting their 24th annual cancer drive. Students canvass surrounding neighbourhoods to raise funds to support the cancer society.

I do have to declare a bias: Both my sons, John and James, are alumni of Hillcrest High School.

Over the past 24 years, the school community has raised over \$500,000.

Your donations are providing hope to thousands of people affected by cancer, and the generosity will fund innovative research, provide vital support services to cancer patients, and help change lives.

1510

People can go online today, Mr. Speaker, to help Hillcrest High School reach this year's fundraising goal of \$20,000. I'd like to thank my friend Lynne Peterman, the parent of a Hillcrest High School student, who initiated the drive in 1995.

I'd also like to thank the students, the teachers and the larger Hillcrest community for continuing this amazing tradition. Your passion and dedication are needed to support those in need, and best of luck with the cancer drive.

NICK WEBB

Mr. Lorne Coe: Whitby Fire and Emergency Services is mourning the loss of one of its own with the death of chief fire prevention officer Nick Webb. Nick Webb died on April 10 at age 57 following a battle with cancer.

He joined the Whitby fire department in 2013 as the chief fire prevention officer, arriving from the Markham Fire and Emergency Services, where he served for nearly 20 years.

Nick served for more than four decades with the Canadian Forces as part of the Royal Regiment of Canada and as a regimental sergeant major of the Toronto Scottish Regiment.

Continually moving up the ranks due to his enduring commitment to his work and his country, Nick was a highly celebrated and decorated service member.

Whitby Fire Chief Dave Speed had this to say about Nick: "Nick will forever be remembered as a fire safety leader who was dedicated to protecting the Whitby community.

"He was passionate about making a difference and has forever left his mark on our department."

Speaker, my sincere condolences to Nick's wife, Cheryl, his daughters, Madeleine and Meaghan, and the members of the Whitby Fire and Emergency Services.

HIGHWAY OF HEROES CLEANUP

Ms. Sophie Kiwala: I'm thrilled to rise today to shed light on the 2018 spring cleanup of the Highway of Heroes.

For three weeks, Kerri Tadeu, retired Master Corporal Collin Fitzgerald and Corporal Nick Kerr have been getting up at 4 a.m. and cleaning all of the on- and off-ramps along both sides of the 172-kilometre stretch of the Highway of Heroes.

I'm very proud of this Kingston trio, each of whom have remarkable stories and have made a big difference, both at home and abroad. Fitzgerald was one of the very first recipients of the Medal of Military Valour for his courageous actions on May 4, 2006, when he entered a burning military vehicle and successfully drove the vehicle off the roadway, allowing others in the convoy to escape. Kerri Tadeu is a psychiatric nurse who proudly served in Afghanistan, and Nick Kerr currently serves as a soldier.

The trio was called SerViCe, and they are scheduled to clean with the CFB Trenton troops and their base commander on April 20 at the Trenton on-ramp at the Highway of Heroes sign. The cleanup starts April 15 and goes until May 2018.

In their pursuit to adopt the entire 172 kilometres of the Highway of Heroes, I think that Tadeu said this beautifully: "In remembering our fallen, part of our initiative with SerViCe, we never want our fallen names to dilute with the passage of time."

The 2018 spring cleanup of the Highway of Heroes is not just about keeping the highway clean; it's remembering those who have fallen and showing appreciation for those who continually serve our country. I would encourage anyone who can connect with the trio to pull up their sleeves in the coming weeks and get involved.

Thank you for your service.

VOLUNTEERS

Ms. Sylvia Jones: This week marks National Volunteer Week across Canada. It's an opportunity to celebrate how irreplaceable volunteers are in making our communities special.

I had the opportunity to celebrate local volunteers last night when I attended the Caledon Community Recognition Night hosted by Mayor Thompson and the town of Caledon council. It was an opportunity to thank committed volunteers who give back across Caledon for organizations like Bethell Hospice, Caledon Meal on Wheels, 4H clubs and numerous sports clubs.

Across Ontario, service clubs like Lions, Optimists, Kinsmen, Shriners and Rotary Clubs, Legions, our sports teams, community bands, churches, hospitals and schools would not be able to function without people volunteering their time to causes they are committed to.

Volunteering is one of the most selfless things you can do because you're offering up your time, and there is nothing more limited, or valuable, than a person's time. Volunteers never expect anything in return for their commitment, just an understanding that the act of volunteering is making our community stronger.

So, to the volunteer delivering Meals on Wheels; to the volunteer reader in our schools; to the service club members raising funds for our parks; and the hospice and hospital volunteers tending to our gardens and our loved ones, thank you. You don't do it for the recognition, but you deserve our thanks.

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

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

GREAT LAKES DAY ACT, 2018

LOI DE 2018 SUR LE JOUR
DES GRANDS LACS

Ms. Thompson moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 54, An Act to proclaim Great Lakes Day / Projet de loi 54, Loi proclamant le Jour des Grands Lacs.

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

First reading agreed to.

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

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: This bill will facilitate an increased awareness of our Great Lakes, to encourage their protection and stewardship so they remain a viable resource that is fishable, drinkable and swimmable for future generations. The bill proclaims June 7 in each year as Great Lakes Day in Ontario.

FAIRNESS FOR THE AUTO SECTOR ACT
(EMPLOYMENT STANDARDS), 2018LOI DE 2018 FAVORISANT L'ÉQUITÉ
DANS LE SECTEUR DE L'AUTOMOBILE
(NORMES D'EMPLOI)

Ms. French moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 55, An Act to amend the Employment Standards Act, 2000 in respect of leaves of absence / Projet de loi 55, Loi modifiant la Loi de 2000 sur les normes d'emploi en ce qui concerne les congés.

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

First reading agreed to.

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

Ms. Jennifer K. French: Currently, the Employment Standards Act, 2000, permits industry-specific regulations about leaves of absence. These regulations can detrimentally affect the entitlements and rights that an employee would otherwise have under the part of the act that deals with leaves of absence. The bill would restrict this power. Industry-specific regulations could still be made, but they would not be permitted to detrimentally affect those entitlements and rights.

DELEGATED ADMINISTRATIVE
AUTHORITIES ACCOUNTABILITY
AND TRANSPARENCY ACT, 2018LOI DE 2018 SUR
LA RESPONSABILISATION
ET LA TRANSPARENCE
DES ORGANISMES D'APPLICATION
DÉLÉGATAIRES

Mr. McDonnell moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 56, An Act to amend various Acts with respect to delegated administrative authorities / Projet de loi 56, Loi modifiant diverses lois en ce qui concerne les organismes d'application délégués.

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

First reading agreed to.

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

Mr. Jim McDonnell: Currently, the minister responsible for administering each act can appoint one or more members to the board of directors of the administrative authority. This bill transfers that power to the Lieutenant Governor in Council. The bill also requires that the Auditor General do an annual audit of the accounts and financial transactions of each administrative authority.

The bill amends the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act to make administrative authorities institutions that are subject to the act. The bill makes the Ombudsman Act and the disclosure requirements for the

Public Sector Salary Disclosure Act, 1996, applicable to administrative authorities.

1520

PETITIONS

HEALTH CARE FUNDING

Mr. Norm Miller: I have an important petition with regard to hospitals in Huntsville and Bracebridge. It reads:

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas Muskoka Algonquin Healthcare has been considering the future of the Huntsville District Memorial and South Muskoka Memorial hospitals since 2012; and

“Whereas accessible health care services are of critical importance to all Ontarians, including those living in rural areas; and

“Whereas patients currently travel significant distances to access acute in-patient care, emergency, diagnostic and surgical services available at these hospitals; and

“Whereas the funding for small and medium-sized hospitals has not kept up with increasing costs including hydro rates and collective bargaining agreements made by the province; and

“Whereas the residents of Muskoka and surrounding areas feel that MAHC has not been listening to them; and

“Whereas the board of MAHC has yet to take the single-site proposal from 2015 off its books;

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

“That the Legislative Assembly of Ontario requests that the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care ensures core hospital services are maintained at both Huntsville District Memorial Hospital and South Muskoka Memorial Hospital and ensures all small and medium-sized hospitals receive enough funding to maintain core services.”

I have signed this and will give it to Sophie.

EMPLOYMENT STANDARDS

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario entitled, “Repeal the Unfair Clawbacks to Auto Workers’ Emergency Leave Days!” I want to thank Ray Lesperance from my riding for signing the petition.

“Whereas Ontario auto workers have been unfairly singled out with an Employment Standards Act exemption in regulation 502/06;

“Whereas auto workers are hard-working people, who juggle strenuous physical labour in the workplace, rotating work shifts as well as six-day work weeks and 12-hour shifts, all while balancing the challenging demands of taking care of a family;

“Whereas clawbacks to auto workers’ bereavement days and personal emergency leave under the Employment

Standards Act exemption in regulation 502/06 will have detrimental impacts on workers, as well as their families and their work;

“Whereas these changes to the Employment Standards Act are discriminatory against one particular sector in Ontario;

“Whereas auto workers deserve the same rights and protections as every other worker in Ontario;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to immediately repeal the regulation to the Employment Standards Act which reduces the number of emergency leave days for auto workers.”

I fully agree with the 3,000 workers who have signed the petition, and will send it to the table with page Eric.

LANDFILL

Mr. Bob Delaney: I’m pleased to join with my colleague from Oxford in this petition that’s addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario. It reads as follows:

“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;

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

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

“Whereas the recent report from Ontario’s Environmental Commissioner has found that Ontario has a garbage problem, particularly from industrial, commercial and institutional ... waste generated within” our cities, “where diversion rates are as low as 15%; and unless significant efforts are made to increase recycling and diversion rates, a new home for this garbage will need to be found;

“Whereas rural municipalities across Ontario are quietly being identified and targeted as potential landfill sites;

“Whereas other communities should not be forced to take another community’s 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, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to formally grant municipalities the authority to approve landfill projects in or adjacent to their communities, prior to June 2018.”

I’m pleased to sign this petition and to send it down with page Maxime.

SCHOOL CLOSURES

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

“Whereas a staff report has recommended Upper Canada District School Board close numerous schools across eastern Ontario; and

“Whereas access to quality local education is essential for rural communities to thrive; and

“Whereas the Ministry of Education removed community impact considerations from pupil accommodation review guidelines in 2015 and has cut essential rural school funding; and

“Whereas local communities treasure their public schools and have been active participants in their continued operation, maintenance and success; and

“Whereas the Ontario government should focus on delivering quality, local education services to all communities, including rural Ontario; and

“Whereas the current PAR process forces bad behaviour by school boards to justify the replacement of high-maintenance outdated schools;

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

“(1) to support MPP Jim McDonell’s motion to suspend all current PAR reviews until a strategic rural education plan is completed, engaging all rural school boards, school communities and municipalities;

“(2) to reinstate considerations of value to the local community and value to the local economy in pupil accommodation review guidelines; and

“(3) to engage all rural school boards, including the Upper Canada District School Board, school communities and municipalities in the development of the strategic rural education plan; and

“(4) consider rural education opportunities, student busing times, accessible extracurricular and inter-school activities, the schools’ role as a community hub and its value to the local economy.”

I agree with this and will pass it off to page Rowan.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

M^{me} France Gélinas: “Save Ottawa hospitals....”

“Whereas hospital overcrowding in Ottawa has reached a breaking point;

“Whereas at the Children’s Hospital of Eastern Ontario”—better known as CHEO—“15 children, including four infants, were turned away in February. CHEO ran at well over 100% capacity in January and February, creating a situation where some of the sickest kids were transferred to other hospitals, and children with minor ailments waited eight hours for treatment;

“Whereas within the first two months of 2018, the Queensway Carleton Hospital has already declared two code oranges, which means that the hospital is completely full—these are the only code oranges that the hospital has declared in its history;

“Whereas years of cuts and freezes to hospital budgets have put patients at risk, reduced front-line staff numbers, and increased wait times—enough is enough;”

They “petition the Legislative Assembly ... to address hospital overcrowding by reversing decades of cuts to

hospital care and ensuring funding keeps pace with inflation, population growth, and the unique needs of communities.”

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

WATER FLUORIDATION

Mrs. Liz Sandals: I have a petition to the Ontario Legislative Assembly to update Ontario fluoridation legislation.

“Whereas community water fluoridation is a safe, effective and scientifically proven means of preventing dental decay, and is a public health measure endorsed by more than 90 national and international health organizations; and

“Whereas recent experience in such Canadian cities as Dorval, Calgary and Windsor that have removed fluoride from drinking water has shown a dramatic increase in dental decay; and

“Whereas the continued use of fluoride in community drinking water is at risk in Ontario cities representing more than 10% of Ontario’s population, including the region of Peel; and

“Whereas the Ontario Legislature has twice voted unanimously in favour of the benefits of community water fluoridation, and the Ontario Ministries of Health and Long-Term Care and Municipal Affairs and Housing urge support for amending the Health Protection and Promotion Act and other applicable legislation to ensure community water fluoridation is mandatory and to remove provisions allowing Ontario municipalities to cease drinking water fluoridation, or fail to start drinking water fluoridation, from the Ontario Municipal Act;

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

“That the Premier of Ontario direct the Ministries of Municipal Affairs and Housing and Health and Long-Term Care to introduce legislation amending the Health Protection and Promotion Act and make changes to other applicable legislation and regulations to make the fluoridation of municipal drinking water mandatory in all municipal water systems across the province of Ontario.”

I’ll sign the petition and give it to page Rowan.

1530

ONTARIO BUDGET

Ms. Sylvia Jones: This petition is to stop Liberal waste and mismanagement.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas in 2016 the Liberals promised to balance the budget, but instead the province is predicting at least six more years of deficit;

“Whereas paying the interest on the debt is costing Ontarians more than \$1 billion a month;

“Whereas these debt payments crowd out the ability to pay for the services that Ontarians rely on; and

“Whereas it is clear that the Liberal government will do, say, or promise anything to cling to power;

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

“To call on the government to stop making last-minute promises and immediately call a general election so Ontario voters can decide.”

I support this petition, affix my name to it and give it to page Mia to take to the table.

LANDFILL

Mr. Percy Hatfield: Good afternoon, Speaker.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“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; and

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

“Whereas proposed Ontario legislation (Bill 139) will grant municipalities additional authority and autonomy to make decisions for their communities; and

“Whereas municipalities already have exclusive rights for approving casinos and nuclear waste facilities within their communities and, further, that the province has recognized the value of municipal approval for the siting of power generation facilities; and

“Whereas the recent report from Ontario’s Environmental Commissioner has found that Ontario has a garbage problem, particularly from waste generated within the city of Toronto. 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, air quality, dramatically increase heavy truck traffic on community roads, and reduce the quality of life for local residents; and

“Whereas municipalities should have the exclusive right to approve or reject these projects, and assess whether the potential economic benefits are of sufficient value to offset any negative impacts and environmental concerns, in addition to and separate from successful completion of Ontario’s environmental assessment process;

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

“Pass legislation, or other appropriate legal instrument, that formally grants municipalities (both single- and two-tier) the authority to approve landfill projects in or adjacent to their communities, prior to June 2018.”

I agree. I’m going to give this to Harsaajan to bring up to the desk.

INJURED WORKERS

Ms. Soo Wong: I have a petition addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

I support the petition, and I give my petition to page Stephanie.

ROAD SAFETY

Ms. Sylvia Jones: This petition is for an advanced green in Shelburne.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the intersection of Highway 89 and County Road 124 is a major artery for travel between Collingwood and the GTA;

“Whereas there have been a variety of serious car and pedestrian accidents at this intersection;

“Whereas Shelburne is the fastest-growing community in Ontario, meaning traffic will only increase;

“Whereas county of Dufferin traffic data already shows a need for an advanced green;

“Whereas residents of Shelburne and the surrounding area deserve to travel their roadways safely;

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

“That the Minister of Transportation immediately install an advanced green at the intersection of Highway 89 and County Road 124 in the town of Shelburne.”

I support this petition, affix my name to it and give it to page Eric to take to the table.

PROVINCIAL TRUTH AND RECONCILIATION DAY

Mr. Michael Mantha: I’d like to thank Bryan Smith from the Oxford Coalition for Social Justice for providing me with the following petition to proclaim June 21 as a statutory holiday in Ontario.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario: Proclaim June 21 as a Statutory Holiday Called Provincial Day for Truth and Reconciliation in Ontario.

“Whereas June 21 is recognized as the summer solstice and holds cultural significance for many indigenous cultures; and

“Whereas in 1982, the National Indian Brotherhood (Assembly of First Nations) called for the creation of a National Aboriginal Solidarity Day to be celebrated on June 21; and

“Whereas in 1990, Québec recognized June 21 as a day to celebrate the achievements and cultures of indigenous peoples;

“Whereas in 1995, the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples recommended that a National First Peoples Day be designated;

“Whereas in 1996, the Governor General of Canada proclaimed June 21 as National Aboriginal Day in response to these calls;

“Whereas in 2001, Northwest Territories became the first province or territory to recognize June 21 as a statutory holiday; and

“Whereas in 2015, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission recommendation number 80 called on the federal government, in collaboration with aboriginal peoples, to establish a National Day for Truth and Reconciliation as a statutory holiday;

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

“To designate June 21 of each year as a legal statutory holiday to be kept and observed throughout Ontario. This day should serve to create and strengthen opportunities for reconciliation and cultural exchange among Ontarians. The day should facilitate connections between indigenous and non-indigenous Ontarians in positive and meaningful ways. This day should solidify the original intent of National Aboriginal Day as a day for Ontarians to recognize and celebrate the unique heritage, diverse cultures and outstanding contributions of First Nations, Inuit and Métis peoples.”

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

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): That concludes the time we have this afternoon for petitions.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

TIME ALLOCATION

Resuming the debate adjourned on April 18, 2018, on the motion for time allocation of the following bill:

Bill 8, An Act to amend the Consumer Reporting Act and the Technical Standards and Safety Act, 2000 / Projet de loi 8, Loi modifiant la Loi sur les renseignements concernant le consommateur et la Loi de 2000 sur les normes techniques et la sécurité.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Mr. Jim McDonell: I guess I was looking forward to be able to speak at length to this bill. Unfortunately, the government is pulling the old closure trick. We’ve seen this before. Especially in this bill, where you had it first introduced as Bill 199 on February 22, there was lots of time to push this bill through. They never saw fit to even call it for debate before they prorogued the House. Of course, that required it to be re-tabled, but really nothing was lost because they hadn’t debated it before that.

It’s surprising that such a rush has come through. We met with various groups in the last week that have had serious concerns about this bill because they hadn’t been consulted. I know when we had our briefing with the ministry, I asked that question: Had they actually had time or had taken the trouble to consult with the credit agency stakeholders? The ministry was very frank. They said that no, they hadn’t, but they planned to do it before they issued the regulations.

You can imagine what the point was if this bill was so important that you haven’t had the time to actually consult with the industry. I would hope that bills by any government would be a little more thought out, a little more concerned with what’s going on. A bill of this importance that it requires closure—but you can’t even get out to look through the discussions to see what the problems are.

1540

Of course, they’re rushing it through. We’re getting calls from the chamber of commerce. There are many groups that are concerned about what they’re doing with this bill and the fact that they haven’t had a chance to have any impact on the legislation, and are really not sure why some of these bills are actually put out.

As you look through this, the issues—it’s an omnibus bill. It addresses unrelated issues. We see the elevator side of it as well as the credit side. We’re not really sure what part the government is concerned about and what they’re rushing through, but unfortunately, we’re presented with this as a large bill that’s going out.

Regardless of the legislative convenience of this government merging several pieces of legislation into one, major consumer-oriented initiatives such as this one should be debated on their own merits. The reason is quite simple: We are all consumers, and these regulations affect our daily lives, and the operations and viability of the businesses operating in the consumer market.

The ultimate goal of good governance in the consumer sphere is a well-informed, honest marketplace where consumers are aware of their rights, make informed choices, and businesses play by clear, simple and well-enforced rules. When some or all of these components of a well-functioning marketplace are missing, the result is distrust amongst participants and increased opportunities for dishonest players to take advantage of Ontarians.

The issues of consumer credit and consumer debt have been before this Legislature on several occasions when we discussed the Collection and Debt Settlement Services Act. During those discussions, we heard of the complex nature of credit, the struggles many consumers

face when trying to repay debt they can't afford, and the practices of debt collectors and debt buyers. These industries exist because of overextended consumers, whether by reason of job loss, unexpected expenses or a lack of proper budgeting.

Within the Ministry of Government and Consumer Services' contact centre, the most inquired-about issue is debt collection and a consumer's rights vis-à-vis the collection agencies calling. This goes to show that credit agreements can go sour much more often than we as consumers and creditors would like.

Credit is neither a right nor a matter of course. It is a bet by the creditor that the debtor will repay the amount owing with some interest. The immediate benefit dynamic is very one-sided. A creditor whose credit is repaid will receive a small amount as a reward for such a bet. A consumer with no intention of repaying the debt will face few immediate consequences while enjoying all the benefits of extended debt. A creditor's profit and benefits come from numerous accounts being paid on time. So creditors must use tools to stack the odds in their favour by selecting those credit applicants who are most likely to repay the extended credit as agreed. This process is by no means easy, but it is remarkably similar to how landlords select tenants and how employers select employees.

Screening people for any purpose involves collecting information about them to evaluate their character and behaviour and to determine their match to the criteria we desire as an ideal candidate. For instance, an employer may want a diligent employee who is flexible with travel plans or available for overtime. In employment, this is easily ascertained through a reference check or a read of the candidate's resumé. For landlords, this can also involve references from previous landlords as well as a look at a prospective tenant's employment and other characteristics.

Which credit characteristics do creditors look at? First, they would like to know that a credit applicant has always paid their other credits as agreed. This is most important and also the most frustrating factor for credit applicants, especially new and younger Canadians: If you need to have a loan or get one, breaking into a credit cycle can become an insurmountable obstacle.

I go on about a case myself, from when I first graduated from university. Of course, I had a student loan, and paid it off in Brockville, where I first got my employment, through one of the major banks. I moved that to Sudbury, continued paying it, and when I moved back home to Cornwall, I tried to transfer what was remaining of the loan back to Cornwall. I had troubles. The bank did not want to take it over because I didn't have a credit rating at the bank, which somewhat surprised me, because I'd been with the Royal Bank for, at that time, probably seven or eight years and had not missed a payment. But sometimes credit can be very local and not necessarily by branch, so it just shows some of the issues you can have.

Once in, timely and complete payments are the best investment a consumer can make to their creditworthiness.

The length and number of credit agreements in good standing is also a contributing factor. A longer record of good payments demonstrates a commitment to maintaining good credit, as well as stable income, stable expenses and strong budgeting attitude. Some algorithms consider the average age of the consumer's overall credit file, meaning a recently opened account will affect a consumer's rating much more if the consumer had one or two credit accounts to begin with. This factor also safeguards creditors from extending credit to a consumer who is opening a large number of accounts in a short period of time, a pattern of behaviour most consumers who aren't facing economic difficulty wouldn't engage in.

Beyond these two main components, the overall creditworthiness equation considers the total amounts owed and the kinds of credit tools used by the consumer. All of these factors combined, a consumer's credit history and risk can be displayed as a three-digit number known as a credit score. The actual equation used to compute it is owned by the private corporation and therefore is not in the public domain; however, they are trusted by lenders to give an objective and impartial assessment of consumers' risk based on available data.

When we met with a couple of the agencies, they talked about this proprietary credit number and the fact that there were actually different credit numbers depending on what the companies were looking for in their credit scores. Really, in many cases, they provide the information to their subscribing companies, and they provide their own credit scores; so these credit scores really aren't always available, nor are they allowed to disclose them. I guess if the government had done the appropriate stakeholder consultation, they would have found that out. It just highlights how we're seeing this government reacting—I don't know if you'd say in an unnatural way, because we've seen this government over the last 15 years as they pull closure whenever they seem to think they're in trouble or want to change the channel.

I saw the Premier comment on the way in this morning about our leader, Doug Ford, not telling the truth about her. I guess she's worried that he's out there telling the truth about her and her record. Of course, her record is nothing that you'd want to be too proud of, as we see the numerous events—

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: Lies. Plain lies.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Northumberland—Quinte West, please withdraw.

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: I withdraw, Speaker.

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

Mr. Jim McDonnell: It seems that the members opposite are somewhat worried about their record, and worried about getting out. We've seen this all before. I look back to, just after getting elected, the minority government back in 2011. We had the committee looking into the gas plant scandals, and they were really being filibustered and stonewalled as to getting any information from the committee.

It was only a deal to get their budget through that allowed the committee to meet during the summer, and it

just became impossible to filibuster for eight hours at a time. Of course, it allowed the committee to put forth a request for information—information that you would think would normally be freely available to the committee, but of course, as history proves, this government—it was a great embarrassment. There was a lot of information. Even though they were ordered by the Speaker to release all information without redactions or any whiteouts, as people would say, or missing any papers or parts of the document, they clearly issued tens of thousands of pieces of paper with actual areas blocked out so that people couldn't read them.

1550

When you're looking at a document and something is blocked out, and somebody took the trouble to do that, one would think that that's because they didn't want you to read something. The files were full of this. So we talk about a very transparent government—this is just how we saw their record and how they behaved.

Of course, the electorate, as well, would have a lot of questions: "Just what are they not showing us? What are they afraid that the public might see?" Of course, the rest is history. As I say, the Premier of the day resigned, we had the current Premier come in, and then, days after she was elected, we saw that David Livingston was involved in the deletion of dozens of computers. This was after the transition team had access—

Mrs. Liz Sandals: No. There was no access.

Mr. Jim McDonell: —to the Premier's office. It's hard not to draw the line if there is a direct connection there.

Mrs. Liz Sandals: Tell the truth.

Mr. Jim McDonell: I know this hurts the party opposite, as they catcall—

Mrs. Liz Sandals: She had no access, and you know it.

Mr. Jim McDonell: Their assigned person in charge, Monique Smith, was picked by the Premier to look over and to make the transition happen. Now she is, of course, out of the country, and outside the view of some of the committees. But just what happened there? We will never know because all these records were destroyed.

After the last election, as soon as the majority was restored, the first thing that this government did was dismantle the committee—again, not really a show of transparency. Actually, the opposite: a complete show of non-transparency.

The other part of this bill talks about the TSSA. Since my time in the Legislature, I've heard no shortage of problems and complaints—

Mrs. Liz Sandals: She had no access to the Premier's office.

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

Mrs. Liz Sandals: That's a matter of record. She had no access.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): I guess I don't have to say anything. Thank you to the member from Guelph.

Mr. Jim McDonell: Thank you, Speaker. I guess I did strike a nerve there. Their memory is not bad as we thought.

But when you look at the TSSA and the issues we've had with propane inspections—companies in my area talk about them coming in. There are no TSSA standards for compressed gas. The world relies on the compressed gas authority, except for Ontario. So it makes it very hard for anybody in that industry, the welding and fabrication industry, to actually stay in business, because you are competing against companies that have a pre-issued set of standards that they can work with. But not in Ontario.

I re-tabled my motion today that actually brings the TSSA under the Ombudsman, Auditor General, freedom of information, public sector salary disclosure—and one might wonder: How would that not be there already?

I will give you an example of a major amusement park in our area where they went through to do an inspection—which is something you would hope they would be doing—looking for safety infractions. Months after the inspection was done, they issued something like 10-plus fines for \$1 million. If something is that unsafe, that you're looking at fining somebody in excess of \$10 million, you would think you would shut them down or do something at the time. Or were you just trying to put them out of business? So they went to court, and of course the courts have thrown out, I believe, all of the charges. But it just speaks to the inability for a business—

Mrs. Liz Sandals: Point of order.

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

Mrs. Liz Sandals: It does seem to me that we have a time allocation motion for elevators and credit reporting. I do not believe that anything the member has said has anything to do with that topic.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Thank you for your comment. I would say to the member that we would like to stay within the guidelines of the time allocation motion we're discussing. I have been very generous with you drifting off that and going after other items. Please get back to motion 8, I believe it is.

Mr. Jim McDonell: Thank you, Speaker. But I think if the member had read the bill, she would know that a major part of it concerns the TSSA. Of course, it's an embarrassment to talk about that agency, and maybe they don't want to talk about it, but what we've seen is complaint after complaint about how there is no oversight over this industry. I went on about incidents in my riding, or very close to it, where businesses have essentially been harassed, whether it be through propane inspection—there's a lot in this bill.

They pushed closure because they don't want us debating it. There are really a lot of just bad examples, but, of course, we've seen this closure pulled over and over by this government. There's no reason for it with this bill. The bill was originally issued in February and re-tabled right away. We sat here discussing motions when we could have been discussing this bill. We've limited the amount of stakeholders who can come. We've

had no stakeholder consultation up to this point. So again, we're getting a bill that's really not worth its weight in salt.

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

Mr. John Vanthof: It's always an honour to be able to stand in this House and speak on behalf of the residents of Timiskaming-Cochrane and my NDP colleagues, and today on a time allocation motion on an act to amend consumer reporting and a technical and safety act.

The act itself is basically about credit ratings and elevators. Those two don't really have much to do with each other, and that's kind of representative of how this government works. They put a lot of things together that don't really have much to do with each other.

But this isn't about the bill itself; this is about time allocation. Basically, what time allocation is, instead of actually following the process, where the government actually consults with people, talks with people and asks for their opinions, they put a bill forward. If this is a time allocation motion on our next bill—on the budget—they basically say, "We're just going to push it through the House as fast as we can. We really don't care." This government really doesn't care what anybody else thinks. That is kind of their *modus operandi*. It's kind of how they've operated in the last seven years since I've been here, and it's getting much worse.

But there is hope for the people of Ontario because there's another time allocation issue coming on.

Mr. Michael Mantha: Oh, what is that?

Mr. John Vanthof: It's the election on June 7, in 49 days. The people also have a time allocation motion, because 15 years is long enough for a government that hasn't listened to them and still doesn't listen to them.

On this bill, we'll talk about elevators. There are people who have been stuck in elevators longer than the government has talked about this bill. That is one of the problems with this government. Elevator safety and how quickly elevators get fixed: Is that an important issue? Of course. It's an issue that didn't show up in the last two weeks. It's an issue that has been percolating. Everyone has been aware of it for many years. This government has been in power for 15 years, but, no, we're going to push this through in the last little while.

Do you know why they're doing this? They're not really doing this for the sake of people stuck in elevators. They will talk about that. They're doing this so they can say, "This is how this government works for you. Look at how we fixed this."

A proof that this government is in so much disarray, Speaker: Elevators are an important issue; credit ratings are an important issue. But they're not issues that fit together. So if you want to get the public's interest in democracy and how this province should work, you should present bills in a manner that your average person can actually understand.

This bill is about two issues that people are interested in, Speaker. Have you ever been stuck in an elevator? There are not very many elevators in my riding, but I've

been stuck in an elevator here. Being stuck in an elevator is not fun; it's pretty close to a horror movie, in some cases.

This is an issue that is really important to people. If you live in a condo building and your elevator hasn't worked for a long, long time, you're really interested in this issue. If you have ever watched *The Big Bang Theory*, you are interested in this issue. This government has been in power longer than *The Big Bang Theory* has been on TV, and they have yet to deal with this issue. That's bad enough all by itself. But now they mix in credit rating.

1600

Mr. Michael Mantha: You can apply for your credit rating in an elevator.

Mr. John Vanthof: That's true; you could. You could check your credit rating on a cellphone—they're not cellphones anymore; they're devices. Anyway—

Mr. Michael Mantha: Electronic devices.

Mr. John Vanthof: People don't call them cellphones anymore.

You can do that, but each time you check your credit rating, I'm told, your credit rating actually goes down. That's something that this bill could deal with, and that's something that people actually want to listen to and want to talk about. That's something that didn't have to be talked about in the last couple of days of a tired government's mandate. That's something that we actually could have had a serious discussion about.

Now, I'm going to go back a second. In the last member's comments, I listened quite intently. I listened to the heckling quite intently too. The member spent a fair bit of time talking about the TSSA, and there are big issues with the TSSA. Despite what some of the government members were heckling, the TSSA is a very important part of this bill, because it's the TSSA that is supposed to look at the elevator problem. The TSSA doesn't really want to look at reliability because they're a safety authority, not a reliability authority. So just because you're stuck in the elevator doesn't mean you are not safe in the elevator, as long as the elevator is not falling down. If the elevator is falling down, then you've got a problem. That's too late for the TSSA at that point.

But the problem I had with the member of the Conservative side talking about the TSSA—I understood he put a motion in today, or a bill, regarding the TSSA. I commend him for that. But the Conservatives are the ones who implemented the TSSA. So it's fine for them to complain about how it doesn't work, but they are the ones who invented it.

The Liberals haven't fixed it in 15 years. They certainly didn't make it any better. But the Conservatives are the ones who implemented it. They implemented an organization that has—and there are special words for it. I'm not good at the special words, Speaker, but they basically have governmental powers but they're not directed by the government. I'm sure they've got the right word for it, since they invented this process. That is the problem with the TSSA. They have a very vital role to fill.

We're not saying the TSSA doesn't have a role to fill that's very important. They monitor furnaces and all kinds of stuff, like gas stations. But sometimes their monitoring isn't that uniform, and that's part of the problem.

In northern Ontario, we've had trouble with the TSSA, not because they are not doing their job but because of our geography. I think they don't have enough manpower. So by the time they get around to inspecting facilities, some of these facilities are so far behind the eight ball they just can't afford to do the changes the TSSA demands. In some cases, perhaps, these changes are a bit more than is actually needed and, as a result, we lose services. When you lose a gas station in northern Ontario and you're an hour to the next one and an hour past the last one, that's a big deal.

So the TSSA is a big part of this bill. Again, if this government actually managed their agenda—even in this term, but over the last 15 years—perhaps we could have had a really good discussion about how an organization like the TSSA could actually do its job and regulate equally across the province. The TSSA faces huge challenges, and if we actually spent the time to discuss this, we could bring people forward from the TSSA. We could have brought forward a type of committee to look at this, to go around the province and look at what it's like. I don't think people in urban Ontario, in many cases, understand what's going on in rural Ontario and certainly not what's going on in rural northern Ontario. The TSSA is a big part of that. The TSSA would benefit if the members understood more about how it worked. The TSSA would benefit and certainly the people of the province would benefit.

But, no, this government chooses not to do that. The TSSA is involved in this bill, but they missed the opportunity to actually look at the problems that are hurting the people of Ontario regarding the TSSA and possibly the challenges that the TSSA is facing that we don't understand. That's a big part of our job: to understand what's going on. The government totally wasted that opportunity.

They talk about the TSSA because the TSSA has something to do with elevators. The TSSA doesn't really have anything to do with credit reporting, and that makes it even more confusing because the Technical Standards and Safety Authority does not regulate credit reporting.

Now, why the credit reporting wasn't involved in a budget bill, which is actually more financial—

Mr. Michael Mantha: Unless they're working out of elevators.

Mr. John Vanthof: Yes, it could be; it could be.

I didn't have much of a train of thought, and now I've really lost it.

Mrs. Liz Sandals: You said it.

Mr. John Vanthof: I don't need the opposite side to heckle me; I can heckle myself quite well.

Hon. Marie-France Lalonde: Heckling yourself—that's funny.

Mr. John Vanthof: But getting back to this, I think the simple part, what frustrates the people of Ontario, and

what certainly frustrates me as a representative of the people of Timiskaming—Cochrane—and this bill is a good example of it. It has three things that just don't fit together: credit reporting, issues of the TSSA and elevator reliability. Those three things have nothing to do with each other. It's issues like that—this is a small one. Individually, those are huge issues. But that is what frustrates the people of Ontario.

It's issues like, in the last election, the government promising to be open and progressive and then the first thing you do is sell Hydro One, jeopardizing the reliability of hydro service in rural Ontario. It's issues like that.

This likely won't be the last time I speak in this session on time allocation because there's another one that just came down the pike. The budget is being time-allocated as well—surprise, surprise, surprise.

I'd like to end my comments: The time allocation that really matters, Speaker, is 49 days until the people of Ontario get to decide—and I think they've already made their decision. They are tired of this government and their 15 years of cynicism.

Hon. Marie-France Lalonde: Last I checked, four years.

Mr. John Vanthof: Oh, I got heckled by the other side—finally. They've only been this government for four years, but the party has been for 15 years.

And why? I'll give you an example of the cynicism. We have so much trouble with hospitals, we have so much overcrowding in hospitals, with people being treated in hallways and bathrooms. The answer from the Premier, from the government, is because we have—again, there's a word that escapes me—an aging population, and that's why it's causing more stressed hospitals.

I don't dispute that. We don't dispute that. The issue is that the Ministry of Health, which this government has directed for the last how many years—15 years—knew that. This didn't happen in the last budget cycle. This didn't happen since the last throne speech. This has been happening and everyone knew it. We keep bringing it to the table. The government has kept acting like it's not happening, and now they're trying to act like white knights trying to fix their own crisis, and the people in Ontario aren't going to buy it. That's why their time is being allocated—49 days, Speaker.

1610

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate? Second call for further debate? Third call?

Seeing nothing, Ms. MacCharles has moved government notice of motion number 6, relating to the allocation of time on Bill 8, An Act to amend the Consumer Reporting Act and the Technical Standards and Safety Act, 2000. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I heard a no.

All those in favour, please say "aye."

All those opposed, say "nay."

I believe the ayes have it.

Call in the members. This will be a 10-minute bell.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Pursuant to standing order 28(h), this vote will be deferred until tomorrow after question period.

Vote deferred.

2018 ONTARIO BUDGET

Resuming the debate adjourned on March 28, 2018, on the motion that this House approves in general the budgetary policy of the government.

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

Mr. Victor Fedeli: I realize this is Groundhog Day all over again. We did this last Wednesday. I suggest that you get comfortable in your chair for the next hour, bring in the refreshments that you need, because we're going to be talking about the big spenders.

"Hey, Big Spender" is what I call this next hour-long speech.

Speaker, this election document that the government refers to as their 2018 budget is proof that this government will say anything, do anything or promise anything to cling to power.

Just months after promising balanced budgets for years to come, the government would now plunge Ontario into six more years of deficits just to announce a series of expensive election promises. These promises are designed to fix the problems created by this government in the first place.

Through cuts and inaction, the government has created a crisis in mental health. Because of skyrocketing hydro, cap-and-trade and increased fees and taxes, families are facing challenges with child care and other costs. And seniors deserve the best health care possible but weren't receiving it. They've had 15 years to address these problems, yet chose to show they care only weeks before an election.

But none of the items that ended with the word "care" made it into the budget bill. The actual budget bill is, as the finance officials called it, very consequential items. It's changing the words "police force" to "police services"—things along that line. That's really what's in the bill. There's no health care, there's no child care, there's no dental care—none of that. We said right on day one, "These are nothing but hollow promises. There's nothing to back them up," and, sure as heck, they're not in the budget bill that we're debating.

It's interesting that what the government failed to announce but what forms a major part of the budget and actually made it into the budget bill are \$2 billion in new taxes on families and businesses. Our skyrocketing debt will further dilute the services families expect.

In Ontario, Speaker, there are currently five personal income tax brackets and two surtax brackets that come in once you eclipse a certain amount of income. The government is removing those two surtax brackets and instead creating seven tax brackets in Ontario. This will raise taxes on 1.8 million people in Ontario. This is a personal income tax that will take \$275 million out of families' pockets.

That's what is actually in the budget bill that we're debating.

But they didn't leave it to just hurting families; they've turned their attention to further hurting businesses. The government is adding to the employer health tax, impacting 20,000 businesses. These medium-sized businesses will each pay an additional \$2,400 annually, bringing \$45 million into the government's coffers out of the pockets of the business community.

Now, even worse than that, the government will match the recent small business federal tax changes that Prime Minister Trudeau put in. You remember how controversial those were. Well, despite all the federal controversy and all of the media about it, this government said, "That sounds like a great thing to tax. Let's do that provincially as well." So those tax exemptions on passive income are now no longer eligible.

What we mean by that, Speaker: It's really interesting to note that during the pre-budget consultations, one of the speakers talked about the fact that there's so little confidence in the business community—backed up by the chamber of commerce and by the Canadian Federation of Independent Business. There is such little confidence that the business community is not investing their money in equipment and expanding their business. Instead, they are keeping that money, and it's in a passive investment right now, hanging on for better days. Well, that income is now being taxed. That is hundreds of millions of dollars to small business, tax on small businesses—hundreds of millions out of tens of thousands of small businesses.

That's what they've done. Altogether, the changes and increases to taxes, new taxes, total more than \$2 billion over the next three years. That's \$510 million this year, \$715 million next year and \$780 million the year after. That, Speaker, made it into the budget, not any of the other items that end in the word "care." Those didn't make it.

Now, it's interesting, Speaker. I call this the small print or the fine print. If you look here on page 224 in the bottom right-hand corner, third line up from the bottom, you will find \$1.225 billion. You wonder, what is that? That is "efficiencies," and when you add \$200 million from the next line, they've got \$1.425 billion in efficiencies that the government is now saying. It's interesting to see that the government admits there are efficiencies to be found. In fact, it's \$1.425 billion worth of efficiencies. If you take that number and annualize that over the four-year period, and then you go to year 2 and annualize that over the remaining three-year period, and go to year 3 and annualize that over the next two years, and take that amount for year 4 as well, that is \$14.4 billion in annualized efficiencies that this government is promising.

When we here in the official opposition use the phrase "We're going to find efficiencies," the government screams, "Cuts! That's it. You're cutting," except when the efficiencies are printed here in the government's own budget on page 224. They only use the word "efficiencies" one time in the whole book. They are that afraid—kind of hoping we wouldn't have found that. It's in the very tiny

print in the notes at the bottom of page 224. When they use efficiencies, they explain it: “Oh, no, no. Those are transformations and we’re finding savings.” But if we said “efficiencies”—as we are claiming as well that there are efficiencies—then all of a sudden it’s “cuts.” That’s hypocritical at best, Speaker—absolutely hypocritical at best. I’d go a little further except I’m going to remain in parliamentary language today.

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I’ve talked to you about these taxes and these efficiencies that the government is going to find, but of real concern to businesses and families should be this government’s dismal economic outlook. The budget projects \$1 billion less in corporate revenues every year due to “increased economic uncertainty.” They themselves—the government—don’t have confidence in our economic activity next year. They’re claiming “increased economic uncertainty.”

They’re saying it’s caused by the US corporate tax cuts, and it very well may be. The US is on fire. There’s no question their economy is on fire. It’s ironic, though, that the US tax cuts, which were brought in to make the states more competitive—our government’s response is to raise taxes. They lower it and eat our lunch, and what do we do to respond? The government raises corporate taxes. It’s unbelievable that they would do that.

Of course, it was announced today that our government would lower the corporate tax rate. That’s what you do, Speaker. That’s how you do that: lower taxes, create jobs. That is just an absolute proven fact. I know the government side doesn’t like to create jobs. We understand that. I’ll talk about their job creation in a moment.

When the States cuts taxes—which was the only advantage we had over the States—what do these guys do? They raise taxes. Their answer is to run us into deeper deficits, hike taxes and make life unaffordable for Ontario families. That’s their answer to the increased economic uncertainty: “I’ve got an idea: Let’s make it even more uncertain by plunging us into deficits, hiking taxes and raising costs.”

The government’s own job projections, interestingly, despite what the MPP—excuse me, Speaker; I don’t want to use her name. The MPP from London North Centre said that the government is creating 500 jobs a day in Ontario. She made that up—made that up out of whole cloth. In their own document, they are cutting their job creation forecast by more than half. It’s interesting: The government’s own job projections in the budget are 128,000 new jobs this year, down to 60,000 jobs by 2021—fascinating. Of course, we know that the jobs created are in Toronto and Ottawa; 99% are in the two urban centres. Through all the rest of Ontario last year, only 1,600 jobs were created.

Of course, we also know that in January we lost 51,000 jobs. Nonetheless, they, in their own document, plunge their job creation numbers from 128,000 this year to 60,000. You’d have to ask: Why is the government doing the absolute opposite of what is needed to create jobs in Ontario? As CTV reported, “This budget had nothing for

small businesses, those owners were looking for some kind of relief....” In the 2019 budget, they got nothing.

The Coalition of Concerned Manufacturers rightly said, “True to form, the ... Liberals did not support Ontario businesses in the budget ... not acceptable, not right, not going to be tolerated.”

Perhaps the most damning comment comes from the government’s own expert witness at the prebudget consultations around Ontario and in Ottawa, where Craig Alexander of the Conference Board spoke. After the budget—this is the government’s own witness—he said, “There really isn’t a rationale for running deficits” right now.

Douglas Porter, the chief economist at BMO, said that “ideally, you would like to see government finances in relatively strong shape when we hit that heavy weather”—the economic uncertainty that the government themselves admit.

The Auditor General has pointed out three areas where the budget does not include the true costs that should be listed. While I have spoken about this in the Legislature many, many times, we do know that this will add billions of dollars to both our deficit and our debt. The IESO has not—this is from the auditor—properly recorded assets and liabilities, leading to \$1.3 billion that is not recorded. The auditor used the word “bogus” in her report. She said that is bogus. She also said the government’s numbers are misstated. That’s very serious, to come from your Auditor General.

The second point is, the government is counting on outside union pension assets—they are counting that money as their own. This would lead to an additional \$860-million deficit this year.

Of course, the Auditor General has also said that the fair hydro plan is not on the government’s books. Now, that’s not just an idle statement; we’re talking about billions of dollars here. It is about \$45 billion we’re talking about, but the government put them over on Ontario Power Generation’s—OPG’s—books across the street. Why? So they can artificially try to get to balance this year. If they had put even one penny of that on our books, we wouldn’t have—

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bill Walker): Order. And I would ask the member from Durham: If you’re going to speak, to be in your chair, please.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: They wouldn’t be in balance. As I’ve said, they’ve run out of things to sell to try to artificially balance, and, as the auditor said, they have used bogus accounting and misstated statements. And that fair hydro plan: The Financial Accountability Officer said, because we’re in deficit, and if we continue and have to borrow money for the fair hydro plan, it could cost the taxpayers up to \$93 billion. Speaker, that’s \$93 billion more.

So we’re at \$312 billion, if you believe the government’s books, which the auditor and the FAO don’t. When you add where our deficit is bringing us, we’re getting

closer to \$370 billion. If you bring that pension money back in, if you bring the IESO money back in and if you bring the fair hydro plan, dare I say, Speaker, we're talking about almost half a trillion dollars in debt in the province of Ontario. That is sad and shocking, Speaker—very, very sad and very, very shocking.

The Auditor General is providing a pre-election report. We're really looking forward to this report, because somebody has to tell us the truth about the books in Ontario, and it is not the government of Ontario. We need to have a truer picture.

So just quickly by the numbers, Speaker, the total government spend for the next year is \$158.5 billion. That's up \$9 billion from the year prior—\$9 billion in new spending. The deficit for this year will be \$6.7 billion. The deficit will remain constant for three years and then slowly return, six years from now—the government has not shown how they plan to get back to balance; they just say magically in six years from now the budget will balance itself. That's what we've heard. So that means they're either going to have to cut \$6.7 billion or raise taxes a further \$6.7 billion. They haven't told us how they're going to magically balance.

Our debt will eclipse \$325 billion this year. Interest on our debt this year is \$12.5 billion—more than a billion a month just to service debt. Interest will rise to \$13.8 billion by 2020-21, to \$16.9 billion by 2024-25. That's assuming that nothing happens to our interest rates, Speaker.

The net debt-to-GDP ratio has increased from 37.1% to 37.6%. Now, I know the government continues to say it's falling, but here it's gone up half a point. They keep wishing and they keep saying it's going to be back to its pre-recession levels of 27%. They say "pre-recession" because they're trying to blame this net debt-to-GDP number on the recession. But what they really mean to say is that they want to get it back to a pre-Liberal debt to GDP of 27%, because when the Liberals came into power, that's where it was; it was 27%. But they continue to say, "We need to get it back to pre-recession." The recession was four years after the Liberals took office, so they'd already been damaging the net debt-to-GDP ratio before that, but it sounds better to blame it on the recession than on their bad spending.

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This budget year will end, according to the government, with a small surplus of \$642 million, but—it's interesting, Speaker—it relies on taking \$600 million out of the contingency fund. Of course, it got there by using one-time revenue, so there is no balance today. It's a big shock that we're in deficit next year; there's nothing left to sell. They sold it all. They sold their shares of hydro; they sold buildings; they sold land. We've always told them, "You can't burn the furniture to heat the house. That's impossible. You're going to run out of furniture one day," which is what they have done.

I stated earlier that many of the promises they announced were to address the problems created by the government in the first place, and seeing as the promises were

announced only weeks before the election, many stakeholders expressed skepticism that they would ever occur. This isn't just our party saying, "I told you so. This is never going to happen."

Let's read from the Toronto Star, because they put it best in their editorial: "These aren't announcements from a government with a clear path to turning them into reality." That's a quote. They also stated, "But with Sousa's promise-everything budget ... the Liberals run the risk of offering too much of a good thing at a moment when their credibility is stretched very thin." That's exactly what we've been saying as well, Speaker.

As I mentioned, when we received the actual Bill 31, the actual binder, the document, the concerns of the Toronto Star and others were very quickly validated. As I said at the beginning, none—not one—of the funding announcements outlined earlier were even mentioned in the actual bill. Speaker, you would think that if the government was serious about implementing any of the promises they made to seniors, parents, disabled and others, they would get started immediately. There are barely eight, nine, 10 sitting days left between now and the day the election writ drops, and most of those days are going to be eaten up with Bill 31. So there are very few days left to bring these promises into reality.

As I mentioned, what is in the bill are all the tax increases. Those, they made sure they jammed through. They want that \$2 billion. They're hungry for that revenue. There's no wasting time getting the tax increases into law.

It's interesting, though: There's one wording change. Speaker, if you are like me and read the budget and get right back down to the last page, page 307—and I've got to tell you, by this time, you've put all your Post-it Notes and are pretty exhausted from reading this thing. You may not have gotten to the end, but if you did get to the end and you read the last line of the budget, the absolute last possible line of the budget, you would understand, Speaker, that there's a change they're making, and that change that they announced in the budget actually did make it into the bill as well. It gives the government a very wide latitude to divert cap-and-trade revenues—remember, we've always talked about how cap-and-trade was never about greenhouse gases; it was always about a slush fund for the government to use. Well, they can divert cap-and-trade revenue to projects that are "reasonably likely"—that's pretty wide latitude—to reduce greenhouse gases. That's quite a shift from the announcement of the justification when the government implemented the cap-and-trade tax. At that time, it was all about, "This money is for"—and they went on.

We outlined back then that they were not quite factual. Even then, there was a schedule that came out in the bill that allowed them to go back and reimburse the crown for monies already spent. That was a big, big change from, "Here, look at what we're going to do with it." They can reimburse. This is for highway projects that are already done. That was the change last year. This time, it doesn't even have to be for those projects. It just needs to be

“reasonably likely.” Well, you could drive a truck through that, Speaker. And these folks, with what we’ve seen them do, that’s exactly what they intend to do.

Deeper in the bill, we found that not only are they going to be able to fund just about anything with cap-and-trade money, now they’re going to backdate these expenses all the way to 2015, even before the bill was passed. They want to be able to go back before the cap-and-trade bill was discussed, wasn’t made into law, and they’re going to now backdate and allow those early bills from 2015 to be paid using this cap-and-trade fund.

It’s also interesting to note that of all the announcements they made last year, \$3 billion in infrastructure was left unspent, and \$6 billion—more than \$6 billion, actually—was left unspent over the last three years.

Since the budget came out, we’ve had a lot of post-budget reactions. The post-budget headlines instantly captured the sentiment across Ontario. These are all headlines from the media:

“Spending Taps Open.”

“Brace Yourself, Ontario.”

“How Much Will All the ‘Freebies’ ... Cost?”

“Election Free-for-All Costs Us All.”

“More Spending, More Fiscal Problems, More Debt.”

“Too Much For Voters to Swallow.”

This is a series of quotes from the media. This is what the media thought of that budget.

It’s customary, about four hours after the budget, that the finance minister and we critics appear on TVO’s *The Agenda*. I’ve done it; it’s my fifth year doing it. The minister is filmed in his office across the street. I watched from the studio and got to comment after. He said almost half a dozen spectacularly interesting comments that have no basis in truth.

He said that the government has “slayed the deficit” and “balanced the books”; “We’re projecting 140,000 new jobs every year”; “We are the top in foreign direct investment”; and “Our debt to GDP remains the same and will be tapering down.”

Well, I’ve got to tell you, Speaker, I was gobsmacked as I’m sitting in the studio listening to the finance minister talk about his own budget and give us five statements. This is the Minister of Finance; he’s a minister of the crown. He gave us five statements and not one of them is based on fact. Not one of them is true, not even one of those. In fact, actually, the polar opposite of those statements would be true, and I’m going to go through them one by one.

First of all, he said that the deficit will be “slayed.” How can the deficit be slayed when his own budget reveals six more years of deficits? How can that be? How is it slayed? How is it dead? How is it gone? Six more years, Speaker.

He says that the books are balanced. Well, that’s artificially balanced, because they sold off everything and put that cash into operating revenue. It’s not on the side; it’s not in reserves; it’s not anywhere. It’s in the operating budget. That’s how they’ve artificially got it there. When that wasn’t enough, then they raided the reserves and used 100% of the reserves to cap it off. That’s how they got to

this artificial balance. Forget for a moment everything that the auditor said on her three points that aren’t included in that either. How can you say that the deficit is slayed and that we’re in balance when neither of those is accurate?

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Then he says we’re projecting 140,000 new jobs every year. Speaker, in his own budget, again, on page 193, they’re projecting 128,000, this year 121,000, falling to 62,000 jobs. How can a minister of the crown look in the camera and say, “We’re creating 140,000 new jobs every year,” when his own book says it’s 62,000 just in 2020? That’s only two years from now.

Then the minister says—this is one he says all the time; I’ll read the exact quote to make sure—“We are the top in foreign direct investment.” Speaker, we used to be. Back in the good old days, we were indeed the top. Sadly, we have fallen. We are not number one in foreign direct investment. Foreign direct investment means money coming in from other areas. We are no longer. We used to be, until we became the highest in energy rates in North America, the highest in insurance rates in Canada, and the list goes on and on for our number one status. We’re number one, but not the number one destination in North America. We’ve fallen to number three.

But then, really, what concerns me and should concern all of Ontario, and likely concerned the rating agencies, as we’ll talk about in a moment, is that the finance minister talked in his book, in the budget—this is a direct quote—about how “Our debt to GDP remains the same and will be tapering down.” How can you say it remains the same when it actually went up this year? In the budget it says it is increasing from 37.1% to 37.6%. That’s a 0.5% increase. It’s not going down, as the minister said, and it is not tapering down, because in his book he says it’s going to rise from 37.1% up to 38.2% next year, and 38.6% the year after. How can you tell the people of Ontario it’s tapering down? It’s not tapering down; it’s going up. What part of “up” don’t you get?

So, Speaker, there are five things that the Minister of Finance said, only hours after he stood here and delivered the budget, that are absolutely untrue. There is no validity in those statements. In fact, the opposite is true. How can the Minister of Finance be allowed to do that?

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: Point of order.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Excuse me. I recognize the member from Northumberland–Quinte West on a point of order.

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: The member keeps referring to stuff that isn’t rooted in the truth, inferring that it’s a lie. I think that’s—

Interjection.

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: Well, I think I just got it confirmed from the member across. I think that’s very unparliamentary, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): I’d just like to remind the member that you cannot say indirectly what you can’t say directly. It’s a very fine line—I recognize

that—so I would ask that you would be very cautious in your statement. Thank you.

Back to the member from Nipissing.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Thank you, Speaker. I just have to think of a better phrase, then, because when a minister of the crown tells the people one thing and the facts are opposite of what he is saying, I don't know what else to call that. I'll have to think deeply about that.

Hon. Jeff Leal: Point of order.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): We have the Minister of Agriculture.

Hon. Jeff Leal: Thanks very much, Speaker. Again, we'll seek your guidance and the table's guidance. You can't say something indirectly that you can't say directly. This is going to be the merry-go-round on this going forward.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Thank you. What I'll rule on this is that I would caution the member from Nipissing to be delicate with his inferences of where he's going, with appropriate correction to anything where he may go in the wrong direction, which I'll be watching and monitoring closely.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Thank you, Speaker. That's quite fair. I appreciate that.

It's interesting, then—I'll reiterate what occurred and what got the government members. The minister said that they have "slayed the deficit." But Speaker, the deficit will continue for six more years, so I'm not sure how we slayed the deficit.

The minister said that we have "balanced the books." The balance is artificial, because we sold assets to get to that and cashed in all of our reserves to get there, and the auditor has said something opposite of that.

The minister said, "We're projecting 140,000 jobs every year." But I went to the book here, on page 192, and we're creating 128,000, according to the minister in the printed book, not 140,000, every year. In 2020, two years from now, he forecasts that we're creating 62,000 jobs. So I'm going by the book here that is published and that we'll be voting on, not by his comments, which obviously are different comments than the facts as laid out in the book.

The minister says, "We are the top in foreign direct investment" destination. It's been released—if you look in the economic outlook, you will see that at one time we were number one, we were the top, but today we are third. We are not the top.

The minister said, "Our debt to GDP remains the same." But in the book, if I go to the page on debt to GDP, you would see that the debt to GDP is not remaining the same. He published here that it's rising from 37.1% to 37.6%. And he said it is "tapering down." Well, again, Speaker, if you look in the book, it's going up from 37.1% to 38.2% and, next year, to 38.6%. It's not tapering down; it's actually increasing. I'm just not entirely sure what else to say about that, other than I will let the facts speak for themselves.

It's interesting. We talked about the fact that none of these programs that end in "care" are actually in the budget. There's a really interesting twist in what's in the

budget document. In the government's top 10 budget highlights—go down there; I think it's number 4—it states about one designed for seniors: "to help them live independently." This is a new program that they're saying is in the budget. But in 2017, just last year, they cancelled a similar healthy homes program for seniors. Again, the last one was "to help them live independently"; the one in 2017 that was just cancelled was "to help seniors live independently." So they've cancelled it and then put it in the budget this year.

This just goes to the point that I'm making, that none of this is real. In fact, when they cancelled the program, their quotes that came in the cancellation was that it "provides little support to low-income seniors" and "had significantly lower take-up than projected." So they kicked it out last year and rushed it back in this year so they could say, "Look at us. Aren't we great? We're doing something wonderful for seniors," on a program that's ostensibly the one they cancelled.

They must think we don't read the budget, or last year's budget. That's why we say, when they delivered this budget, that it's not a budget. It's nothing more than an election document. There's nothing about that. The fact that we're voting on this bill, which has none of those programs in it, reinforces that.

We'll go back to the Toronto Star for a second, because they seem to agree with us. Their editorial was entitled, "Ontario Liberals' Ambitious Budget May Be Too Much for Voters to Swallow." That's the title of their editorial. It goes on to say, "So much at such a high cost will strain the credulity of voters, who may well wonder why the Liberals didn't do more during their 15 years in office."

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They go on to discuss the importance of many of the ambitious programs, but they deduce, "These aren't announcements from a government with a clear path to turning them into reality." At least we're not out there suggesting this alone, Speaker. The Toronto Star backed up what we said. They conclude with, "With election day in Ontario just over two months away, voters are bound to see them for what they are—\$20.3 billion worth of promises from a government and party fighting desperately against the odds for re-election."

We're pleased we're not alone in our thinking, but the piling up on the Liberals continued as RBC Economic Research prepared a sobering budget report entitled *Deficits by Choice*—interesting. They conclude that "a return to deficit is ... a matter of choice."

That's backed up by the Premier. She said it was a conscious choice to go into deficit. Well, we have said no, it's not a conscious choice. You sold off all our assets. You have nothing left to sell. It's a consequence that you're now continuing in deficit. It's not a choice; it was inevitable. You have nothing left to sell to continue with your attempt at balance.

"The cumulative deficit"—this is from RBC research—"over the coming three years totals \$19.8 billion, approximately equal to ... the government's newly announced

initiatives (\$20.3 billion).” What they’ve added to spend happens to be the amount that we’ll be in deficit. That’s a choice.

“What is worrying about this plan is ... most of the measures ... are recurring entitlements. It makes the ... choice fraught with risk.” These payments now will go on forever. While the government offers a return to balance in seven years, “there are no details on how they will achieve it. This is concerning since so much spending ... kicks in late in the fiscal plan.” They’re in deficit, but many of the programs they’ve announced, should they ever do them, wouldn’t kick in until later.

We’re in deficit because—it’s what we call a structural deficit. That’s because you’re paying your day-to-day bills with your money. This government is borrowing—100% of the money they borrow goes to pay interest. Can you imagine, Speaker? We’re using our Visa card—we’re borrowing that money—to pay off our MasterCard every month. They’re borrowing \$6.7 billion next year to pay \$12 billion in interest. Can you imagine? If you did that in a household—well, you couldn’t.

When we talk about the structural deficit, when we talk about these deficits, think of it as your family mortgage, your house mortgage. If your mortgage balloons and you add to it, you have less money to pay for your insurance, which as we know is the highest; your electricity, which as we know is the highest; your day-to-day expenses. That’s this government. They’re borrowing to pay our day-to-day expenses, and basically, it’s just to pay the interest. That is shocking. That is utterly shocking that we borrow to do that.

RBC continues to say, “Six more years of deficits may be optimistic.” There’s no plan to get out of deficit, so it’s optimistic. What they’re saying is that we won’t be out of deficit in six years if this happens. Virtually every analyst across Ontario said, “If Ontario is running large deficits when the economy is performing at capacity, what happens if a recession comes along?” This is all still quoting: “A pre-existing deficit and an elevated debt burden will limit the government’s ability to respond and virtually guarantee a rapidly deteriorating fiscal situation.”

Of more concern should have been the warnings from the credit rating agencies and the bond agencies that we got the day the budget came down. At that time, Moody’s Investors Service and DBRS immediately issued warnings to the Ontario government over their plan to run deficits the next several years. The two credit rating agencies said that the fiscal plan, which includes billions in new spending, would harm the province over the long term. Moody’s led off with: The return to deficit spending is a “credit negative as it raises the likelihood that the province faces a structural deficit”—we’ve talked about that—“in addition to increasing our forecast of the debt burden to accommodate the associated borrowing.”

Today, Moody’s came out with something even worse. Now they have downgraded the province’s credit outlook from stable to negative. That is very serious. They said, “Spending pressure will challenge the province’s ability to

sustain balanced fiscal results across multiple years.” Two weeks ago, they were concerned. They said, “There’s a credit negative here. Get your act in order and tell us something we need to hear.” The government just sloughed them off; they didn’t care—they don’t care—and ended up with Moody’s turning in and downgrading the province’s credit outlook. They also said that assumes that the budget will lead to “an upward trend in the debt burden and a faster rise in interest expense than previously anticipated.” That is very serious to hear from the credit rating agency, Moody’s, who only a couple of weeks ago gave them a warning.

It’s interesting. I used part of that as a question today, and the finance minister said they have acknowledged that we have an Aa rating. Well, actually, Speaker, if you go back to the good old days when we had an AA rating, that’s changed. In 2012, Moody’s downgraded us. We had an AA1 rating. Years later they downgraded us to an Aa2 rating, and then downgraded us to an Aa2 (n), for negative. That’s really where we are. It’s not an Aa rating. We used to have the best rating in the country. Those are long-ago days.

Over the last several years, we’ve had five different downgrades. I’m not saying we were downgraded five ways, but five different companies and organizations have downgraded us to varying degrees. This, believe it or not, sadly will be just the tip of the spear—that Moody’s has now downgraded our outlook.

DBRS—that’s another rating agency—followed with, “It demonstrates in the clearest terms that the province is not committed to disciplined ... fiscal policy.” While both agencies at that time stopped short of downgrading Ontario, what they shared is that Ontario’s creditworthiness will come under pressure as a consequence of returning to deficits, and now we’ve seen Moody’s take the next step.

I talked a lot about our debt and what it means. It means to families, and it means—in the Auditor General’s words—that we’re crowding out the services that we need in Ontario. It also will likely, we thought, weigh in on our bonds, and that too is exactly what happened.

When Ontario and Quebec both offered up our bonds at the beginning of the month, Quebec came out on top. They sold their securities at a spread of 8 basis points closer to the federal benchmark than Ontario. Quebec sold half a billion dollars of their new 2.75% bonds at 65.5 basis points above the feds, while Ontario sold three-quarters of a billion of new 2.9% bonds at 73.5 basis points over the benchmark. All the bonds have a similar maturity date. But why did Quebec win out? Well, it’s interesting. They outlined a plan to deliver a balanced budget for five consecutive years, pay down debt and lower taxes for small business. That’s Quebec’s plan. What did Ontario do? We plunge us into deficit for six years, add billions in debt and increase business taxes—the three absolute opposites of what Quebec did.

1700

Robert Kavcic of BMO sums it up with, “Quebec has made meaningful progress on its fiscal situation, while Ontario has done little else but spend the recent economic windfall.”

The cumulative effect—this is the effect of Ontario’s record-high input costs—caused the Ontario Chamber of Commerce to recently weigh in. They’ve asked the government to rescind the small business tax increases in the budget. They said, “At a time when industry in Ontario is feeling the impact of the rising minimum wage, significant labour reforms, increasing global and US competition, and rising input costs, we need government to reduce the cumulative burden, not add to it.” That’s from Rocco Rossi, the president of the Ontario Chamber of Commerce. They called on the government to remove the two tax reforms that will cost employers nearly half a billion dollars in new taxes.

The government certainly doesn’t acknowledge the fiscal imbalance that they have created, nor do they understand the trouble that it has caused in the marketplace.

The early April numbers are out. Exports decreased, and small business confidence fell from 59 to 57.1. Toronto home sales were down 39.5% compared with a year ago.

It’s interesting; this past year has been one for the record books. You have legislative officers who continue to provide detailed accounts of the true state of Ontario’s finances, while the government continues to disparage both of the financial officers. Let’s spend a moment and talk about that.

Early last year—I’ll be quoting a lot, Speaker—the Financial Accountability Office of Ontario warned of the government’s “broader pattern” of secrecy, and that their refusal to provide information was making it “difficult ... to assess the plausibility of the government’s financial projections....” That’s not a good start of the year for the government.

This was quickly followed by the government continuing to ignore the ruling of the Auditor General regarding the booking of pension plan surpluses as an asset. Auditor General Bonnie Lysyk said she won’t give her “seal of approval.” Speaker, this is no small dispute. At the time, it was \$11 billion at stake; it’s over \$12 billion today. That could easily tip the province back into deficit, as she believes we are, and raise the debt by \$12 billion, which she believes is true.

Last spring, the government was so eager to spread word of their so-called fair hydro plan that they bought \$1 million worth of taxpayer-paid advertising. Again, the Auditor General weighed in. She called the ads a “pat on the back” that could be considered partisan. She said that the ads likely wouldn’t have been approved under the old government advertising rules. The auditor was so incensed by the changes that she penned a special report to the Legislature, decrying these changes. She said that changing the rules would end up giving the taxpayers the bill for millions of dollars of partisan ads. Then she said,

“Sure enough, the government walked right through that open door.”

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Well, we have someone going—they were quiet, and you just decided to visit them. Your guy is speaking.

And we’ve got another little quorum going over here.

Sorry, member from Nipissing. It’s tough to control it.

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): And we have a back-seat driver involved too. Thank you very much.

You may continue.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Thank you very much, Speaker.

As if those comments weren’t bad enough, it seemed to head straight downhill from there.

Responding to the government’s economic and fiscal outlook, the FAO projects “a steady deterioration” in Ontario’s budget deficits “due to moderating revenue growth combined with higher expenses.” He went on to say, “Beyond 2017-18, the deficit is projected to deteriorate steadily due to rising expenses” and slower revenue.

Again, the Premier says it’s a conscious choice to plunge Ontario into deficit, but when you’ve used all this temporary tax revenue, as the FAO calls the one-time expenses—he warned the government that “beginning next year, the growth in tax revenues is projected to moderate while the boost from one-time non-tax revenues will end.” So while the government claims these new deficits are designed for families, the FAO forecast this was going to happen. He said it was inevitable. Plunging us into deficit was not a conscious choice, Speaker, as I said earlier; it’s a consequence of using one-time revenue.

This is interesting. Before you buy into this fair hydro plan, the FAO said, due to the nature of the proposed financing transaction that’s involving OPG across the street, he recommends that members of provincial Parliament obtain assurance from the Auditor General that this is going to be an accepted accounting treatment.

Well, the auditor that very afternoon said the government plans to borrow \$26 billion, “but it does not want to reflect the overall impact of these borrowings” on the consolidated financial statements. She said that that is a “dangerous precedent” and a move that “does not meet public sector accounting standards.”

Then the FAO came out with his report that said the debt reduction is based on “unlikely assumptions” and that it’s “more difficult for legislators and the public to assess the government’s ... projections. This has reduced ... transparency and reliability.”

That led the Auditor General to come out with her report that says our statements are “significantly understated.” She said the government inappropriately recorded the market account of the IESO.

She also said, and this is a quote, “The government’s structure will hide from Ontarians the real financial implications of its electricity rate reduction.” She said the

government statements are “unreliable.” We’ve gone from deterioration to “unreliable.”

She said the government’s intention was to hide: The government’s intention was to “avoid showing a deficit in the province’s budgets” and consolidated statements, and to likewise show no increase in the debt. They did not properly account for the debt.

Again, the FAO said there was a deterioration. He said that our books are increasingly unreliable. The Auditor General said our accounting methods will conceal the true deficit and net debt, and that this will “seriously distort the true state of the province’s finances.”

Speaker, are you hearing these words? “Conceal,” “distort,” “deteriorate,” “unreliable,” “hide.” This is unbelievable. “Understated,” “inappropriate”: These are all words from our legislative officers.

But it gets even worse for the province. The auditor said the accounting is “bogus” and highlights the fact that the “financial and accounting structure was designed to avoid reporting” the hydro scheme’s costs. She claims it was “allowing the government to falsely claim” their budget numbers. That’s in the auditor’s report that was here.

The auditor also concluded that the report had “incorrect accounting, deceptive and obstructive behaviour by the IESO’s board and management, and poor financial controls.” She said she may issue an adverse opinion. That means negative, Speaker. That means the first time any Auditor General in the history of our country, not just our province, will issue an adverse statement. Can you imagine that we’ve come to that? Nobody believes the numbers that this government has given us. She has already given us two qualified opinions; that means she doesn’t believe the books. This time she’s saying they’re wrong.

1710

Speaker, I’ve outlined why we can’t support this document. I appreciate the hour. It seemed to go by lickety-split.

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

Mr. Michael Mantha: Speaker, I believe that we have unanimous consent to stand down our lead on this bill.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member for Algoma–Manitoulin is asking for unanimous consent to stand down their lead. Do we agree? Agreed. We now go into 20-minute rotations.

The member from Algoma–Manitoulin.

Mr. Michael Mantha: Thank you, Speaker. It is always an honour and a privilege to stand and take my place on behalf of the good people of Algoma–Manitoulin to talk about the present budget bill that is in front of us, and also to talk about what is really important to them. It’s quite obvious that we are dealing with a Liberal government that has been in place for 15 years. It’s something that I hear about each and every day when I’m travelling in the coffee shops, that people have made the decision that they are going to be moving on.

The member from Timiskaming–Cochrane brought up earlier a great analogy. This government is known for their

time allocation motions, and he brought up the analogy that there is a time allocation that has been served on this government, and it’s 49 days and counting.

There is going to be a change, and Ontarians have made that change. They have come to the realization that there is going to be a change. What is that change going to be? They’re looking at the parties on the opposite side. They are looking at the Conservatives and they are looking at the NDP as far as, “What do you have?”

We know what the Liberals have done wrong, and that’s something that was very key from the previous speaker, who just spent his hour lead talking about what the Liberals have done wrong over their 15 years in great detail. But what he didn’t talk about, what is obvious as well to everybody else outside of this House, is: What is their plan? What is their option, and what are they offering?

Because each and every day, when I walk into our local coffee shops, Canadian Tire, the grocery store and mom-and-pop shops, it’s, “We know what’s going wrong. We can read. We see it. We feel it”—and they’ve been feeling it for a very long time—“but we want to know what you’re going to be doing to change. What are the options that you are going to be bringing in to make our lives a little bit better? What is it that you are going to do that is going to significantly impact our lives for the positive?”

I have to say, the only thing that I heard from the Conservative member who just spoke as far as a suggestion or a step forward for what they would be doing—I do want to say that I respect my Conservative colleagues. I talk to a lot of them. We often meet at receptions here, and we have conversations. We share a glass of wine at times. I respect them, because I know where they’re coming from. I don’t agree with them, but I know where they’re coming from and I know what they’re going to do: They’re going to cut, and that’s what’s going to happen.

Mr. Ford has been going across this province, making grandiose statements in regard to what he’s going to do. I want to come back to the member: The only thing he offered in his statement, as far as an idea that is going to help the province and that he says is going to generate jobs, is to cut corporate tax. If you do that, then there are services that are going to be suffering. And what services are those going to be? Will it be health care? Will it be our schools? Will it be our roads? Will it be infrastructure? Those cuts have to come from somewhere.

This Liberal budget is pretty much, from what I see and what I hear, that last-ditch effort, that Hail Mary that they’re going to put out there in order to try to meet the needs of Ontarians. It’s not going to happen. The decision has already been made for a very long time.

Let’s just grab a look at what happened with Hydro One, because those are some of the issues that I hear about when I’m travelling in my riding of Algoma–Manitoulin. I’ve talked about these issues in the past, Mr. Speaker, and you may have been in the chair. But let me bring you a little bit of the reality as far as what people are being faced with.

We're being challenged with, first, the sell-off of one of our largest assets. This was done without any discussions with Ontarians. That happened. That's a fact, and people are suffering the effects of that.

Let me talk to you about the community of Chapleau. Again, I've brought this up. This is their recreational facility's utility bill. The discount that was given to them that was actually a credit—the electricity used was for \$3,076. The delivery charges were—

Interjection.

Mr. Michael Mantha: Sorry; yes. It was \$3,076. The delivery charges were \$2,936. The regulatory charges were \$839. The debt retirement charge was \$967. Here's the kicker. Here's the global charge—well, first, the HST charge, which is \$3,009. Here's the kicker: The global charge was \$15,550, for a total bill of \$26,156. That's what is going on in northern Ontario. That's one municipality.

Mr. Norm Miller: So what was that for?

Mr. Michael Mantha: This was a recreational facility, their ice rink.

Here's an individual—and we've heard these stories from many on the opposition side. Here's a meter that was read for a house that was unoccupied. There was nobody in the house. The breaker was turned off. The electricity consumption on-peak: zero kilowatts. Mid-peak: zero kilowatts. Off-peak: zero kilowatts. His monthly charge for that month was \$118.34, for zero consumption.

There's another story that I've brought forward: a small, family-operated sawmill, a cedar sawmill, the Taylor Sawmill on Manitoulin Island in M'Chigeeng—again, a small, family-operated business. They do some fabulous work. If you need a backyard sauna or a nice little shed, you should get a hold of them. They have some island bunkies that are there. They are fabulous. Gail and Roslyn Taylor are just good at what they do. And they're innovative. They have tried to make ends meet with everything that they have done. They've looked at cutting their costs, but their hydro just keeps going up and up and up. They used to have, at one time, roughly 25 employees who were there. They were down to 12, and I believe they are at a lower point now. We've reached out to the ministry to look at ways and means of trying to bring their electrical bills to a lower amount, and unfortunately we couldn't do anything. We brought in individuals from Hydro One who have gone out to their sawmill, and the only advice that they received was to invest in capacitors, to the tune of about \$160,000 to \$180,000, in order to bring their bills down. There was no assistance that could have been offered to them. Those are some of the challenges that we have with electricity.

1720

Back to this bill: Is there anything that is contained within the government plan that will help these individuals? No. These individuals are still going to suffer those pains regardless of what is implemented. If we were to look at some of the proposals that we're putting forward, is there some help, is there some hope? Yes, there is,

because we talk about how we're going to be able to bring some of those prices down by almost 30% for some people across this province. How are we going to be able to do that?

Well, first, you deal with the handling of the sale of Hydro One. Was it the right thing to do? No, it wasn't. That was a public asset that was giving us the funds that we need. That was the asset that had the ability to attract business. We had the flexibility of making some adjustments and bringing that investment into our province. We've lost that because we put it out to privatization and it's now gone. It was started by the Conservative government, and express-delivered by the Liberal government.

There are more costs that are coming in with the actual sale of Hydro One that we're going to be feeling for years to come. There's the artificial credit that they've imposed. We're going to be seeing the negative impacts of that very shortly, after the end of this next election. Within three years, we're going to be right back to where we were just a little bit of time ago, where this Liberal government claims they've addressed the issue by providing that 25% credit to Ontarians. We're going to be punished for that a few years from now and then some more is going to be happening from it.

I also hear often from people in my riding. Pearl, a beautiful, more mature lady, often writes to me. I've got about six of her letters here that she wrote to me. I've read this before, in the past; I think I want to read it again because Pearl deserves that respect. She says:

"I cannot understand knowing what is best for the working couple, seniors, since I believe she"—referring to the Premier—"receives everything from me. Car insurance is supposed to go down. Well, sir"—"sir" being me, who she's talking to—"mine went up. Most people"—sorry, Speaker. I'm going to have to put on my glasses for this one.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: You're getting old.

Mr. Michael Mantha: I am getting old, too.

"Most people and businesses cannot afford hydro. Working and seniors would sure appreciate if hydro could count on their income tax. We have disconnected TV. We purchased a barbecue to cook outside. I load the washing machine and wash after 7 p.m."

She lists a bunch of her items that are costing her: her usage, delivery charges, regulatory charges and so on. Her usage is \$297; delivery charges, \$200; regulatory charges, \$19; retirement charges, \$22; HST of \$70, for a total of a \$610 bill. Her electricity charges are \$557.

She spends the time looking at every nickel and dime that she has, and in this budget there really isn't anything that is going to help her.

I enjoy sitting down with her and giving her some of the ideas that we're going to have, that we're going to be bringing forward, that we're not hearing from the other option. You remember, I started my statement today, Mr. Speaker, by saying that there has been a choice. People have made a choice in this province as far as where their options are going and how they're going to be making that decision. They know and they feel each and every day

what the Liberal government has done. They don't need to be educated in regard to what has gone wrong. What they want to know is how we are going to put this back on the right track. How you do that is by helping people, by providing them with a true universal pharmacare plan, a true system which will help them with a dental plan.

Yes, I hear it from my constituents sometimes. They say, "Mike, you always stand up and you say the negatives of what's there with the Liberal government." Well, because there are lots. But the reality is that what we are proposing is actually going to be beneficial and it is going to help. It is not a band-aid solution or a response to what we have been proposing, because for a long time from sitting across the way—and I've been here since 2011—there are many ideas that have come from this side of the House that are somewhat reflected in the policies that the government has proposed. I know for a fact that I've proposed some legislation in the past that took about two or three years, but it was no longer my idea or the ideas of my colleagues; it has now become the idea of the Liberal government, and they have implemented it. Not to the satisfaction or to the degree that was initially proposed, but it has ultimately now become their idea when they propose it.

So I go back to our pharmacare plan, where we would provide prescription coverage for all Ontarians, not just some—all. For a lot of the individuals coming out of university or college, once they're stepping into that job, that's when they really need it. Moms and dads who are working in precarious employment, they really need it—and so do youth, and so do seniors. But provide something that is fair for everybody across this province.

The dental care plan that the Liberal government is proposing is ultimately a \$50 credit; that's what you're going to get. Come on. Speaker, how much does it cost you to go get a filling done or even a sitting over at your dentist? Just to sit in the chair is 80 bucks. Just getting a cleaning is about 150 bucks. What is a \$50 credit going to do for a family of four? Not very much.

Again, I go back to half measures that are being done because the government feels that they have to respond to some good ideas that are coming from the opposition. That's what we are doing, and that's what we are focused on: providing good ideas and good policy so that the public is not confused in regard to the choices that they are going to be making and so that they know, "This is what you're offering? This is what you're giving? All right. Then I'm going to look at what you're offering."

Twelve-dollar-per-day child care is what we're going to be looking at, as far as our platform that we are going to be providing to individuals, in not-for-profit organizations, instead of losing those funds to for-profit. That's what parents have been asking for.

In our hospitals: For how long have we been suffering in our hospitals with overcrowding? We've heard it again from the member from Timiskaming-Cochrane who alluded to it earlier: the hallway medicine, the care that is going on in washrooms, the care that is going on in hall-

ways. How can that be acceptable for us here in Ontario where we have such a rich and abundant—that is not acceptable. We are going to be bringing an end to that.

We are also going to be adding 2,000 new beds, making sure that individuals can get the care that they need when the care is needed.

In long-term care, looking at the systematic problems that are contained within our long-term care—again, the Liberals had the opportunity to expand the mandate when they had the inquiry. They could have looked at all of the historical issues that had been faced there: the shortage of staff, the concerns that were going on with the hallway medicine, just the concerns that were going on with the homes, the burnouts that were going on with a lot of the individuals who are working within a lot of our long-term-care institutions, the four hours of care that we could be offering—which is part of our plan, which we're going to be offering to Ontarians to make that choice. I don't hear that plan from the opposition. I don't hear a plan at all.

When you look at providing options for home care, this is not a new problem in this province. Has it been addressed in the Liberal budget? No, it has not. Will there be shortfalls? Absolutely, there will be. But we will look at investing \$30 million in community care and opening up 35 new community health centres by 2025; that's what we're looking at doing. We will stop the layoffs that are happening with our front-line workers. Why? Because that's what we need. We need to put in those strategic investments in order to get the returns we're absolutely going to need.

1730

There are a lot of things that we're going to be doing in education. There are a lot of things that also are missing from the Liberal platform, or their budget, that are not going to be helping Ontarians. But we're providing something more positive. We're providing an option. Again, I go back to what my constituents have always been asking for, for a long time: "Mike, we want to know what you're going to be doing, what your party is going to be doing, because we know what they are not offering and we know what they have done. We want to know how you're going to be doing it."

We're going to be helping students. We're going to be looking at establishing a true relationship with our First Nations communities. We're going to be working on rail. I'm proud that as soon as I'm done today, I'll be heading into Sault Ste. Marie for a rail summit to talk about a real rail strategy, connecting all parts of this province. We're going to be talking again about how we're going to be addressing broadband, which is a big part of the economy in northern Ontario.

How are we going to be doing this? We're going to be asking those who are that well off to pay just a little bit more in this province. That's how we're going to be doing it.

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

Mr. Granville Anderson: It gives me great pleasure to speak to this budget motion this afternoon. I've been listening intently to my colleague from Algoma-Manitoulin address the budget and speak about certain aspects of the budget.

He spoke about hydro. It's ironic that that party, the third party, voted against the fair hydro plan, which has resulted in a 25% reduction across the board in hydro rates. They voted against that. That increases to over 40% or 50%—it depends on where you live—in rural communities. Those are our plans. Those are all what the NDP voted against.

I will not even speak about the Conservatives because they don't have a plan. It's a bumper sticker plan that their leader, from town to town, speaks differently to different—it's a different story every day, and it's a slogan. I cannot even speak to slogans. At least the NDP has a plan. It might not be a realistic plan, but they do have a plan.

Our plan provides more options to families. If we look at our drug plan, our OHIP+ plan, it covers over 4,400 drugs. Their plan covers, what, 125 drugs? That's not a universal plan. When we talk about universality, we are speaking about a plan that's going to give the drugs that everybody in this province needs and deserves. When you talk about the full scope of drugs, that's what we want. From zero to 25 years old, they've got coverage with 4,400 drugs. If you're over 65, the same thing applies.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound.

Mr. Bill Walker: It's always a pleasure to comment on my colleague and friend the member from Algoma-Manitoulin. He talked a fair bit in his speech about energy and the challenges members in his riding are suffering from as a result. Nothing in that budget document talks about actually fixing hydro. Certainly I share the same concerns in Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound. I trust most of my colleagues are hearing the exact same things.

I shared earlier that this government has put rates up between 50% and 300%, depending on who you talk to. Businesses are struggling because of it. There's nothing in that budget that actually addresses that they're going to fix hydro and bring those rates down.

They did borrow \$25 billion, and I believe my colleague from Nipissing brought up in his comments that that could, under the auditor's numbers—and I think we trust those a lot more than the government's—cost the taxpayers of Ontario \$93 billion to repay.

This morning, we talked a little bit about how Moody's credit rating agency has downgraded the province's credit outlook from stable to negative as a direct result of their election document budget. Moody's said, "Spending pressure will challenge the province's ability to sustain balanced fiscal results across multiple years." Moody's also assumes the budget will lead "to an upward trend in the debt burden and a faster rise in interest expense than previously anticipated."

Currently, it's the third-largest expenditure of the provincial government—paying interest on the debt—which gives nothing to anybody on the front lines. It does

nothing about programs and services, it does nothing to help people, and they're adding to that pile; \$6.7 billion is going to be the deficit on this budget after they promised that we would have years of balanced budgets. I'm not even going to go into how that one wasn't truly balanced.

This is not a forecast from Moody's. This is an actual outright condemnation of this government's fiscal policies. It's a conscious choice, the Premier keeps saying, but it's actually a consequence of one-time revenue. They've sold most of the furniture. There's not much left in the house. It's getting bare. This budget is a very big concern for all of us in Ontario, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. John Vanthof: I'm very happy to be able to comment on some of the debate put forward by my colleague from Algoma-Manitoulin, but I'm going to focus on some of the comments on his debate.

First of all, regarding the member from Durham, the NDP is extremely proud that we voted against the fair hydro plan, because the one part of the fair hydro plan that they keep forgetting to tell the people of Ontario is that it's the fair hydro temporary plan, because the costs are still there; they're coming back after the election. So if that's fair in the view of the government, that's another reason why they've got 49 days to go.

But as flawed as the fair hydro temporary plan is, at least it's a plan. A bad plan is at least a plan as opposed to our folks to the right here. The Doug Ford Conservatives actually had a plan for hydro which included the fair hydro temporary plan, but now that plan has gone, so they're just going on a wing and a prayer. Their plan for hydro is, "Trust us. We tried to sell it last time. Unfortunately, we can't sell it this time because the Liberals already sold it. So trust us."

We have a plan that's actually going to reduce hydro rates and change the structure, so there won't be a big balloon payment at the end like the Liberals are talking about. That's what their fair hydro plan is: It's temporary. It's going to be a fairly big shock when the bill comes in from the Liberals' fair hydro plan.

Once again, I'd like to thank the member from Algoma-Manitoulin. One thing he always does is that he brings up the concerns of his local constituents, and I respect him very much for that.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Etobicoke-Lakeshore.

Hon. Peter Z. Milczyn: I'm pleased to rise and respond to the member from Algoma-Manitoulin and his remarks on the budget. He and I would agree on many of the issues that are of concern to Ontarians, and we disagree on how we're addressing them.

Of course, in our budget, we've already addressed hydro prices with the fair hydro plan, but in terms of the budget, there are investments in health care, investments in pharmacare, investments in seniors, in home care, on-going investments in infrastructure.

I look across the floor, Mr. Speaker, at my Conservative friends, and I really feel sorry for them. They're test-driving a Ford, but it's a car they actually didn't want. They wanted maybe a Chrysler or a General Motors. They got stuck with this lemon that the people of Toronto already test-drove before. We sent it back. There was a recall. It got sent back.

When we listen to Doug Ford—we heard him earlier today in Cornwall. Many of us on this side of the House, and perhaps even some of the New Democrats, got involved in provincial politics because of the damage the Conservatives did to our communities. When I hear Doug Ford saying that he's going to tie infrastructure money to municipalities on the condition that they first have to cut and slash—

Hon. Jeff Leal: Don't steal my speech.

Hon. Peter Z. Milczyn: The Minister of Agriculture is going to say more about that. But we know that at the city of Toronto when Doug Ford brought in the auditors, what he derived from that was, "There are too many libraries. Close the library branches. There are too many services, too many firefighters." There were no efficiencies. There were just cuts, and that's what the Conservatives are going to offer again.

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

Mr. Michael Mantha: I want to thank the members from Durham, Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound, Timiskaming-Cochrane and Etobicoke-Lakeshore for their comments.

I want to touch on the member from Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound—you're absolutely right. You and I are pretty well matched up, at the same age that we have. It's going to be my kids, my grandchildren, your grandchildren and their children and their grandchildren who are going to be paying for the mistakes this Liberal government has made with their so-called fair hydro plan. That's the reality. There are no ifs, ands or buts about it. We're going to be paying for that mistake for a very long time.

1740

I don't want to really throw stones, as far as that Ford vehicle. It's not my shtick, and I would probably get an earful from my constituents if I went down that road.

I do want to say, what got me involved in politics were the years that I saw this province being decimated by the previous Harris government that was there. That's what piqued my interest as far as getting involved in politics.

But for the last 15 years, what has really fuelled me to stand up for my community members, the people I see in my community, are the constant errors and the arrogance of this Liberal government.

Again, I will go with what I said in my opening statement: I will respect a Conservative, because I know what they're going to say and I actually know what they're going to do—and no, I don't agree with it. But I can't say the same for this Liberal government. I cannot say that, in the honest position that I am standing here, for the good people of Algoma-Manitoulin.

I had so much more to add to my comments in regard to what we have to offer.

There is change that is going to be coming to this province, and it's going to be a change for the better under an NDP government.

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

Hon. Jeff Leal: I know my good constituents of Peterborough are tuning in right now, on Cogeco channel 95. Perhaps they're getting ready for their dinner. I'm going to tell my good folks and constituents in Peterborough to just put the dinner on hold for one moment, because they know that I'm going to have a few things to say.

Mr. Speaker, what happened this afternoon is really interesting. Before I came here in 2003, I was a city councillor in Peterborough for 18 years—deputy mayor, chair of the audit committee. I chaired social services twice. This afternoon, I'm getting calls from my municipal colleagues from right across the province—from Wawa to Windsor, from Cobourg to Coboconk. Why would they be calling me on a Wednesday afternoon? I know they like to chat with me about what's going on in their municipalities. I get to visit a lot of them. I go to ROMA, and I have a very good relationship. Many of them come from different political stripes, but we have a good relationship. But what has them all upset? I've got to share this with you. That wonderful publication, the Cornwall Standard-Freeholder—a great piece of journalism, good journalists, good operation. Here's what the Leader of the Opposition said to that fine newspaper: "Progressive Conservative Party of Ontario leader Doug Ford said he would be willing to help the city of Cornwall with its infrastructure deficit if he is elected Premier in June, but"—here's the gem of all time—"only if municipalities across the province start cutting what a PC government would deem as wasteful spending" at the municipal level.

Well, Mr. Speaker, I know Christmas usually comes on December 25, but Christmas just came on April 18.

Here's the context of this: I went through those days. Mr. Harris set up the famous Who Does What committee. He had his fine people going right across every part of the province of Ontario. We, at the municipal government, certainly gave that committee a new name. It was called the "who got done in" committee. Mr. Speaker, I should pose a question to you: Who got done in? It was the municipalities. Oh my goodness, they downloaded social services costs, they downloaded public health costs, they downloaded ambulance costs. The list went on and on and on. It was a clever strategy, because I know what they wanted to do. They wanted to offload all of those services that would potentially—particularly social services. If there was a downturn in the economy, because they went through—

Interjections.

Hon. Jeff Leal: We've uploaded all the social services.

Interjections.

Hon. Jeff Leal: Yes, we have. As my friend the Minister of Municipal Affairs often says: \$4.2 billion.

And I do know—because I know the books of the city of Peterborough inside out—for the city of Peterborough, the upload of social services alone was a \$24-million benefit. Those costs should have never been put on the property tax in the first place. Property tax, by nature, is a regressive tax.

So Mr. Speaker, now you know that municipalities—today was like a B-52 flying over municipalities and the Leader of the Opposition hit the bombs-away button. Kaboom. When you start, what are you going to cut municipally? Are you going to cut those soft services, like arenas, parks and libraries? Because you know what's going to happen here: On the surface, the only thing you can do to backfill those revenue costs will be to raise property taxes; but of course, on the other hand, you could raise user fees, and that's what may be looked at.

I also want to quote from a publication, the Peterborough Examiner. It's a great paper. It was just recently taken over by the Toronto Star, so now we have a little bit more balanced opinion pieces. There was one yesterday that was really priceless. It was written by Michael Coren. Many of you may know who he is. For years, he wrote columns in either the Catholic New Times or the Catholic Register. He has always been acknowledged as a very fine journalist. Here's what he had to say yesterday in the Peterborough Examiner:

“Social Conservative Firebrand Poses a Problem for Ford...”

“Here's their problem right now. Failed leadership candidate Tanya Granic Allen, the darling and champion of social conservatives, is running for the PC nomination in Mississauga Centre, and if she wins it and then the riding itself, she will be a perennial problem for a party that is trying desperately to appear populist rather than extreme, and folksy rather than ideological.

“This is why Ford himself has been silenced, when at all possible, by his handlers.” And this is Michael Coren saying this, not me. This is an opinion piece. “He knows little of policy, is influenced by the last person to whom he spoke, and is likely”—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Point of order—oh, we've got two. The member from Parry Sound—Muskoka.

Mr. Norm Miller: I thought we were debating the budget this afternoon. Perhaps we could ask the speaker if it's actually the budget we're talking—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): I do believe the minister is talking about financial burden, which may have some ties to the budget. So I'm going to overrule that.

Go ahead.

Hon. Jeff Leal: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate your ruling. Of course, I have great respect for you, so I will abide by your ruling.

I just want to finish this article. I recommend it to my friends opposite. I gave a copy to my good friend the member for Wellington—Halton Hills, because this says a lot about policy. Here's what a Conservative insider said: “If we could put him in bubble wrap, duct tape his

mouth, and send him to Florida for two months, we'd certainly win the election.” That's a rather interesting summation by a very distinguished author, Michael Coren.

I did open about the fine story in the Cornwall Standard Freeholder about what is going to happen to municipalities. So I say to all my mayors and reeves and my good friends—in fact, I was in Peterborough this morning talking to eight of them. Do you know what they were talking about? They said, “Jeff, we're going to be bracing, because the ‘who got done in’ committee—we're starting to have that film all over again. We thought we went through it for eight years, but now we know. We're going on Netflix this evening, because we know the sequel is coming fast.”

Remember that B-52 bomber flying over municipalities in Ontario? The Leader of the Opposition has got the button: Bombs away. So, municipalities, get ready for what is going to happen there, because it's not going to be nice.

Let me say a few comments about the budget. First of all, as Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs, we're very pleased that the ag budget got increased again. That's extremely important, of course. Agriculture contributes \$37.6 billion to Ontario's GDP. The basis of agriculture, of course, is those 50,000 family farms, those hard-working men and women who each and every day produce the finest product that's recognized around the world. Part of that is that we have 800,000 Ontarians who are employed in this sector in everything from VQA wine to potatoes to turnips to carrots to winter wheat to corn to soy, and all those crops in between.

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Mr. Speaker, I know you'll want to know this: Ontario is the most diverse agricultural province in Canada today. Over 200 commodities are grown in this great province, and it's a great reflection on the men and women who are employed in this sector each and every day.

Currently, I want to remind all members, we've instituted a review of the Risk Management Program in the province of Ontario. There's a guaranteed base of \$100 million each and every year for those farmers who are in the non-supply-managed sector. Of course, last July, Ontario, along with my colleagues in Saskatchewan and the province of Quebec, forced the federal government into doing a national BRM review for the first time in decades. I remember trying to convince the former minister in Ottawa, a good friend of mine, Mr. Ritz, who did a lot of work there. But finally—finally—we got the national government to agree to this review, with my good friend Lawrence MacAulay.

In fact, Mr. Speaker, I have a picture of Lawrence MacAulay in my constituency office in Peterborough. Back in 1993, Mr. MacAulay was the minister of veterans' affairs. He came to Peterborough for a Canada Remembers event. I was the deputy mayor, so I got a picture of Mr. MacAulay. I remind him of that every day, and of course we want to move forward on that.

One of our great investments that we're going to make—I heard the member from Nipissing this afternoon talking about the budget. Well, the fact of the matter is that everybody knows that when you present a budget, there are budget allocations within each ministry, so I suggest that the finance critic take a look at each individual ministry to see what the increase is going to be during this fiscal year, to make sure we can provide for those programs.

Mr. Speaker, I want to talk a bit about mental health for a moment. One of the things I hear when I'm at the East City Coffee Shop in east Peterborough when I'm having a western sandwich and usually a cup of coffee—it's about seven bucks, good value; the Sina family have a very fine family restaurant there—is the lack of common ground now in politics in Ontario. There was a point in time when we all had common ground in politics in the province of Ontario. We may take different avenues to reach the end point—some may travel the 401, some may travel the 407 and some may travel Highway 7—but we're at a point in time when we used to have common ground.

I think all of us in this chamber, all 107 members, certainly believe that making new investments in mental health is simply the right thing to do. I was on the Select Committee on Mental Health and Addictions. We had 23 recommendations—ably co-chaired by Christine Elliott, working closely with my colleague the member from Oakville. When I hear the chief of police in Peterborough, my good friend Murray Rodd, who will be retiring in June, tell me that 35% of his service calls are now dealing with mental health issues, I think all of us can agree that investment there is a priority for us all. I know we want to do it.

The other thing about common ground: I find it really interesting when we don't recognize in the province of Ontario—maybe we're questioning Statistics Canada, but when they tell us that the unemployment rate is at 5.5% in the province of Ontario, the lowest it has been in 17 years, that should be a common-ground statistic that we can all agree to, but we seem to be lacking in that acknowledgement of common ground.

The member from Nipissing said this afternoon that the economy is only good in Ottawa and Toronto. Mr. Speaker, let me shed some light on that. Karan and I have a lovely daughter: our daughter, Shanae. She is in first year at Laurier in Waterloo. In fact, we'll be going to pick her up on Sunday to bring her back home to Peterborough. I think she has already got her summer job lined up, because economic conditions are quite positive right now.

I'm in Waterloo fairly frequently to have a visit with our daughter. I see signs all over the Guelph-Cambridge-Kitchener-Waterloo area: "Looking for people to work." In fact, when you look at the statistics in those areas, that area of the province of Ontario is now at full employment—less than 5.5%. The economy is booming there, which I find rather interesting because on one hand, after

the budget, I heard some very positive comments by the mayor of Kitchener. I'm paraphrasing the mayor somewhat when he said, "Things are booming in Kitchener." Then I hear the member from, I think, Kitchener-Conestoga and the member from Kitchener-Waterloo tell me that it's doom and gloom. Well, something is not adding up here. Either the mayor doesn't know what's going on, or we have members who just can't acknowledge that there's some common ground when it comes to the economy of the province of Ontario.

Can I get one of the pages to get me a couple of glasses of water, please?

I could talk about my hometown of Peterborough. Do you know what the unemployment rate is right now in Peterborough? It's 4.8%. I remember my good friend Monte McNaughton; his riding is—can I have his riding? What is it?

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Lambton-Kent-Middlesex.

Hon. Jeff Leal: That's right. He's a wonderful guy, and I quite like him; I have a lot of respect. He's a former business owner.

But I used to remember that he would stand up in his place and say, "Well, you know, Mr. Speaker, for the last 35 months, the unemployment rate in the province of Ontario has been above the national average." Well, now strangely silent, he doesn't stand up and say, "For the last 36 months, the unemployment rate in Ontario has been below the national average." I find this somewhat passing strange: We could talk about it when it was so high above the national average, but when it's below the national average in the province of Ontario, there's deathly silence from the opposition benches, which is somewhat interesting, indeed.

I want to talk about some of the other investments that we're making. Of course, I'm very pleased that, a number of weeks ago, we announced a new long-term-care home in Havelock, Ontario. It's part of my riding—125 new beds. I have never seen such enthusiasm in the community in Havelock. It rivalled the Havelock Country Jamboree. Mr. Speaker, have you ever been to the Havelock jamboree? It occurs in August every year, with some of the great western singers from all of North America. They come to the great village of Havelock and put on a great story. But I tell you, when I made that announcement, people were jumping up and clapping, because it's good news for their economy. Not only will it bring better health care to Havelock-Belmont-Methuen, but it will create valuable jobs in that community, which is so important.

I want to finish—I'm a great admirer of Mr. Davis. Mr. Davis was an outstanding Premier of the province of Ontario—

Mr. James J. Bradley: Never balanced a budget.

Hon. Jeff Leal: But he ran 14 straight deficits.

Mr. Speaker, I want to quote from W. Darcy McKeough. Mr. McKeough is a very distinguished Ontarian. He came from the Chatham-Kent area, served many years on the board of Union Gas, and was commonly referred to as "the Duke of

Kent.” If you read Steve Paikin’s book about Mr. Davis—and I recommend, Speaker, that you do, because it is a really fine piece of work about Mr. Davis and all of his accomplishments. I don’t have my book with me today, because I could reference the chapter, but the Duke of Kent, the Honourable W. Darcy McKeough—what did W. Darcy McKeough say about deficits?

Mr. James J. Bradley: What did he say?

Hon. Jeff Leal: He said, “If this was a private sector balance sheet, all of these investments would be seen as assets, because they help one generation, the next generation, the next generation, the next generation.”

When you look at our budget, we’re taking the advice of W. Darcy McKeough. I can’t think of a better person, because he was a distinguished parliamentarian. He and his wife, Joyce—remarkable people. I know that, even as he gets on in years, W. Darcy McKeough is still contributing to Ontario.

Mr. Speaker, thank you for the opportunity to—

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

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): It being 6 o’clock, this House stands adjourned until 9 o’clock tomorrow morning.

The House adjourned at 1800.

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Duguid, Brad (LIB)	Scarborough Centre / Scarborough-Centre	
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Fife, Catherine (NDP)	Kitchener–Waterloo	
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Gates, Wayne (NDP)	Niagara Falls	
Gélinas, France (NDP)	Nickel Belt	
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Hardeman, Ernie (PC)	Oxford	
Harris, Michael (IND)	Kitchener–Conestoga	
Hatfield, Percy (NDP)	Windsor–Tecumseh	
Hillier, Randy (PC)	Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington	
Hoggarth, Ann (LIB)	Barrie	
Horwath, Andrea (NDP)	Hamilton Centre / Hamilton-Centre	Leader, Recognized Party / Chef de parti reconnu Leader, New Democratic Party of Ontario / Chef du Nouveau parti démocratique de l'Ontario
Hunter, Hon. / L'hon. Mitzie (LIB)	Scarborough–Guildwood	Minister of Advanced Education and Skills Development / Ministre de l'Enseignement supérieur et de la Formation professionnelle
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Mangat, Amrit (LIB)	Mississauga–Brampton South / Mississauga–Brampton-Sud	
Mantha, Michael (NDP)	Algoma–Manitoulin	
Martins, Cristina (LIB)	Davenport	
Martow, Gila (PC)	Thornhill	
Matthews, Deborah (LIB)	London North Centre / London- Centre-Nord	
Mauro, Hon. / L'hon. Bill (LIB)	Thunder Bay–Atikokan	Minister of Municipal Affairs / Ministre des Affaires municipales
McDonnell, Jim (PC)	Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry	
McGarry, Hon. / L'hon. Kathryn (LIB)	Cambridge	Minister of Transportation / Ministre des Transports
McMahon, Hon. / L'hon. Eleanor (LIB)	Burlington	Minister Responsible for Digital Government / Ministre responsable de l'Action pour un gouvernement numérique President of the Treasury Board / Présidente du Conseil du Trésor
McMeekin, Ted (LIB)	Ancaster–Dundas–Flamborough– Westdale	
McNaughton, Monte (PC)	Lambton–Kent–Middlesex	
Milczyn, Hon. / L'hon. Peter Z. (LIB)	Etobicoke–Lakeshore	Minister of Housing / Ministre du Logement Minister Responsible for the Poverty Reduction Strategy / Ministre responsable de la Stratégie de réduction de la pauvreté
Miller, Norm (PC)	Parry Sound–Muskoka	

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Naqvi, Hon. / L'hon. Yasir (LIB)	Ottawa Centre / Ottawa-Centre	Attorney General / Procureur général Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire du gouvernement
Natyshak, Taras (NDP)	Essex	
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Rinaldi, Lou (LIB)	Northumberland–Quinte West	
Romano, Ross (PC)	Sault Ste. Marie	
Sandals, Liz (LIB)	Guelph	
Sattler, Peggy (NDP)	London West / London-Ouest	
Scott, Laurie (PC)	Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock	
Sergio, Mario (LIB)	York West / York-Ouest	
Smith, Todd (PC)	Prince Edward–Hastings	
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Tabuns, Peter (NDP)	Toronto–Danforth	
Takhar, Harinder S. (LIB)	Mississauga–Erindale	
Taylor, Monique (NDP)	Hamilton Mountain	
Thibeault, Hon. / L'hon. Glenn (LIB)	Sudbury	Minister of Energy / Ministre de l'Énergie
Thompson, Lisa M. (PC)	Huron–Bruce	
Vanthof, John (NDP)	Timiskaming–Cochrane	
Vernile, Hon. / L'hon. Daiene (LIB)	Kitchener Centre / Kitchener-Centre	Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport / Ministre du Tourisme, de la Culture et du Sport
Walker, Bill (PC)	Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound	
Wilson, Jim (PC)	Simcoe–Grey	Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire de l'opposition officielle
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Wynne, Hon. / L'hon. Kathleen O. (LIB)	Don Valley West / Don Valley-Ouest	Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs / Ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales Premier / Première ministre Leader, Liberal Party of Ontario / Chef du Parti libéral de l'Ontario
Yakabuski, John (PC)	Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke	
Yurek, Jeff (PC)	Elgin–Middlesex–London	
Zimmer, Hon. / L'hon. David (LIB)	Willowdale	Minister of Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation / Ministre des Relations avec les Autochtones et de la Réconciliation
Vacant	Bramalea–Gore–Malton	
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**Standing Committee on Public Accounts / Comité permanent
des comptes publics**

Chair / Président: Ernie Hardeman
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Lisa MacLeod
Bob Delaney, Vic Dhillon
Han Dong, John Fraser
Ernie Hardeman, Percy Hatfield
Randy Hillier, Lisa MacLeod
Liz Sandals
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Katch Koch

**Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills / Comité
permanent des règlements et des projets de loi d'intérêt privé**

Chair / Président: Ted McMeekin
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Lou Rinaldi
Granville Anderson, James J. Bradley
Grant Crack, Joe Dickson
Jennifer K. French, Jack MacLaren
Deborah Matthews, Ted McMeekin
Lou Rinaldi, Bill Walker
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Christopher Tyrell

**Standing Committee on Social Policy / Comité permanent de
la politique sociale**

Chair / Président: Peter Tabuns
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Monique Taylor
Lorne Coe, Mike Colle
Vic Dhillon, John Fraser
Ann Hoggarth, Gila Martow
Ted McMeekin, Peter Tabuns
Monique Taylor
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Jocelyn McCauley