No. 156

Nº 156

ISSN 1180-2987

Legislative Assembly of Ontario

First Session, 41st Parliament

Assemblée législative de l'Ontario

Première session, 41e législature

Official Report of Debates (Hansard)

Journal des débats (Hansard)

Wednesday 6 April 2016

Mercredi 6 avril 2016

Speaker
Honourable Dave Levac

Clerk
Deborah Deller

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

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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

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Wednesday 6 April 2016

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mercredi 6 avril 2016

The House met at 0900.

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

Prayers.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

SMOKE-FREE ONTARIO AMENDMENT ACT, 2016

LOI DE 2016 MODIFIANT LA LOI FAVORISANT UN ONTARIO SANS FUMÉE

Resuming the debate adjourned on April 5, 2016, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 178, An Act to amend the Smoke-Free Ontario Act / Projet de loi 178, Loi modifiant la Loi favorisant un Ontario sans fumée.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): When we last sat, the member from Nickel Belt had finished her comments. It is now time for questions and comments.

Hon. Kevin Daniel Flynn: It's a pleasure to rise in the House to discuss our government's Smoke-Free Ontario Amendment Act this morning. Typically, I think, when we think of smoking, we think in terms of cigarettes, cigars and tobacco but, obviously, it also applies to other products and other substances. One of those products, one of those substances that is in the newspaper a lot lately and is being regulated in other jurisdictions, is medical marijuana, but because the Smoke-Free Ontario Act is currently in place in the province of Ontario—which I believe enjoys the support of all parties in this House—we also need to bring in a few rules that are going to apply to other products or substances, the example being medical marijuana.

What we believe on this side of the House, simply, Speaker, is that it's time we expanded the Smoke-Free Ontario Act so that it also allows the government to prescribe products and substances other than tobacco to be subject to the terms of the Smoke-Free Ontario Amendment Act that talks to the no-smoking provisions. With the help of this legislation, the government is going to prescribe, through its regulations, medical marijuana as one of the substances that is subject to the current Smoke-Free Ontario Act's no-smoking rules. What it is doing, certainly, is it's taking a piece of what I think is popular legislation and it's updating it to changes that are taking place in our society today.

What it would mean is that a person who was smoking something like medical marijuana for medical reasons would have to do that in certain places and could not do it in workplaces, could not do it in enclosed workplaces, in public places that are enclosed. The same health risks we recognized with the Smoke-Free Ontario Act should also apply to new substances as they emerge. Really, in my opinion, this is a sensible amendment to existing legislation and should be supported by all members of this House.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Further questions and comments?

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: First of all, I want to commend the member from the third party on her hour lead-off yesterday. It shows the tenure, experience and passion that she brings to her position. Her constituents are very fortunate. You couldn't help last evening but be moved by her continuous, consistent effort to make Ontario healthy—and I applaud her for that—from reducing flavoured tobacco to going up against the Liberal government when they wouldn't be listened to with regard to making Ontario healthier, with regard to being smoke-free, with regard to her comments around the need to address different cancers. Again, I commend her; her constituents are very lucky.

Specifically to this bill, Bill 178, the Smoke-Free Ontario Amendment Act, we have to call it for what it is. This is an effort by a tired government that made a mistake initially, and they're trying to clean up their act. As they are cleaning up their mistake that they made in their efforts to make Ontario smoke-free, I would suggest to them and invite them to continue cleaning up their mistakes. For instance, why on earth are we affording and awarding proponents of wind farms more opportunity to pollute the countryside with a source of energy that we cannot afford and we absolutely do not need? It baffles so many people as to why this government continues to choose to make mistake after mistake.

But we have seen this government backtrack before. Just yesterday—apparently, they're stepping back from their effort to pull more dollars out of seniors' pockets by backtracking on the prescription directive they were taking. They have time to clean up the Green Energy Act as well. I encourage them to do that.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member for London–Fanshawe.

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: It's always a pleasure to stand up in the House and contribute to a debate that our health critic from Nickel Belt has given her lead on, because she does her homework. I've been talking to the member from Nickel Belt, and she expresses the concern

that this bill is really a correction of an error on this government's part.

During the consultation process on Bill 45, stakeholders came forward to express their concerns about this very issue, and rather than the government paying attention and listening to deputations and people's presentations, they decided to shut them out. This is what this government has been doing in many examples, just like seniors' Ontario drug benefits. They decided that they were going to increase the deductible from $100 to $170 for seniors. What happened? There's an outcry and this government has now put a pause on it; the same example here. This is really rudimentary, in a sense. We're here debating this bill because this government isn't listening to people when there are consultations.

Now we're talking about regulating tobacco and prescribed products and substances. We know second-hand smoke is not good for the public at large. Yet now we have to debate this, knowing this is something that could have been worked into Bill 45. It's disappointing; it's really disappointing. It's always important, though, to talk about health prevention, which I know our critic supports very much. Anti-second-hand smoke is making sure we have health promotion in public places.

The effectiveness of this bill is going to be that it's going to protect employees, customers and bystanders from exposure to second-hand marijuana smoke.

I'm glad we're debating this bill, but it's disappointing that we're debating it because this government didn't listen to the original Bill 45 consultations on how this important issue should have been incorporated into Bill 45.

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

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: I look forward to speaking briefly on this bill, but I think I'll speak in a little bit more detail later on. I just wanted to highlight that I'm a very strong proponent and supporter of the Smoke-Free Ontario Act.

I have the great distinction of coming from a city, Ottawa, where we were the first city to actually outlaw smoking in public places, in restaurants. That was a very controversial issue at the time. I believe the Attorney General, the member from Ottawa–Vanier, was on city council, and the member from Ottawa West–Nepean, the Minister of Energy, was the mayor at that time.

0910

They really broke ground in Ontario and in Canada, I would say, by being the first jurisdiction to make sure that people were not allowed to smoke in public spaces. It has resulted, I can tell you, in a much healthier city and an environment where people thrive—businesses, in fact, are thriving even more—because they are able to go and enjoy their time. Ottawa then took another big step as a leader by saying that outdoor spaces like patios be excluded as well. Again, that was the right move.

So I'm really happy, Speaker, that under the Smoke-Free Ontario Act we continue to take a leadership role and, through this legislation, are expanding the scope of the legislation from tobacco products to other products as well, so that we can ensure that people continue to breathe and live and enjoy themselves in a healthy environment, and that they will not be exposed to second-hand smoke, not just from tobacco but from other products and substances as well, like medical marijuana. Of course, we have to respect other people and their rights, but we need to make sure that we do so in a way that we all continue to breathe in a healthy environment. I look forward to expanding a little bit more on this issue when I get the opportunity to talk on this bill.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Nickel Belt has two minutes.

M^me^ France Gélinas: Bill 178, as I said, is a very small bill. All the bill will do is change four words in the Smoke-Free Ontario Act, and add "prescribed products and substances." Speaker, we just spent seven months working specifically on the Smoke-Free Ontario Act when we were talking about Bill 45. Bill 45 just ended on May 29, 2015. It hasn't even been nine months since we had worked on this bill for seven months—changed the Smoke-Free Ontario Act—and now we're back at it again.

Why are we back at it again, Speaker? Because the Liberals refused to listen. People were not only smoking tobacco, Speaker; people are smoking shisha, they are smoking medical marijuana, they are smoking many other products. All of those deputants came and told us this while we were doing the work on Bill 45. But the Liberals knew it all. The Liberals had their way; they had their bill. It did not matter how many amendments we made—over hundreds—they voted them all down. They refused to listen; they knew it all.

Now, nine months later, we have to go back and fix it. It's not going to cost them anything, but during that period of time, businesses have been set up. People invested their money, time, effort and energy building up those new businesses because we had passed a piece of legislation and the regulation was finally clear. All of those businesses will go under and will have to fail, will have to fold, and this is on their record. They were willing to bail out the gas plants. Will they be bailing out all of those small businesses that will go under because of their lack of listening? I hope so, Speaker.

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

Mr. John Fraser: Mr. Speaker, I'll be sharing my time with the Minister of Children and Youth Services and also the government House leader. It's a pleasure to speak to the Smoke-Free Ontario Amendment Act.

Before I get to that, I want to say happy birthday to my mother, who is at home; I'm not sure if she is watching. I'll see you on the weekend, Mom. I love you. My mother is a smoker—sorry, Mom, was—and I've outed her. A bit more about that later, but I would like to mention it, because it's an important part of what I want to talk about today.

Of course this Smoke-Free Ontario Amendment Act is going to provide us with the opportunity, through regulation, to be able to add products to the Smoke-Free Ontario Act to ensure that we treat products that could cause

harm to people in the same way we're doing with tobacco.

I would like to say a couple of words about a few colleagues of mine: Phil McNeely, who was the member from Ottawa–Orléans; the Minister of Energy, Bob Chiarelli, who was the mayor of Ottawa at the time; and Rob Cushman, who was the medical officer of health. I remember the work they did to stop smoking in restaurants. That's some 10, 15 years ago. At the time, the sky was going to fall. Businesses were going to go out of business, restaurants were going to have a hard time, bars were going to have a hard time. Indeed, the exact opposite happened.

I want to go back to my mom. My mom quit smoking more than 40 years ago. Sorry, Mom. You were 20—not quite. But here's the thing: Forty years ago, my mother, who is a registered nurse, knew smoking wasn't good for her and wasn't good for the family, and so she quit smoking. So did my father at the time. He quit smoking as well. That's 40 years ago. You're roughly looking around 1986.

As you take a look at smoking legislation and how it has progressed since that time, how slowly it progressed through the 1980s and through the 1990s and through successive levels of government, and our attitudes toward that, when we all knew that smoking provided a serious, serious health risk—we really didn't do very much.

It wasn't until things started to happen at the turn of this last century—in 2001, 2002 and 2003, and then the Smoke-Free Ontario Act, things began to happen. Then my colleague from Ottawa–Orléans at the time, Phil McNeely, the former member, had a private member's bill banning power walls, which was very important to ensure that young people did not begin the habit of smoking. I congratulate him on that, and the Minister of Health. It was an important measure going forward.

Smoking legislation has been something that's been incremental over a period of time. I take the member from Nickel Belt's admonitions—I don't want to take them to heart; I'm just saying I can understand a certain level of frustration. But I do want to say that over a period of time, successive governments of successive stripes have incrementally improved legislation to protect the health of Ontarians. The finger-wagging is not really helpful, and that kind of goes both ways. So I'm not wagging mine right now, but what I do want to say is we have a bill in front of us that's going to enable us to be able to—

Interjection.

Mr. John Fraser: It's not a terrible piece of legislation. There are important measures with regard to protecting people from second-hand smoke. I think we have to take a serious look at vaping. Let's go back 60 years ago, when people were telling us, "Yes, smoking's okay. It's good for you." We used to have studies that said smoking is good for you. So let's take a deliberate and thoughtful look at what's out there and have this legislation passed so we can implement those regulations that we deem necessary to protect Ontarians.

Mr. Speaker, I fully support this piece of legislation and I cede my time over to the Minister of Children and Youth Services.

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: I'm pleased to join in the dialogue to talk about the Smoke-Free Ontario Act, which will provide that no-smoking rules will apply to products and substances other than tobacco.

I think, as a number of members have commented, things have evolved. Attitudes have changed about smoking over time. When I was growing up, my dad smoked—and he was a firefighter. So that was like double smoke. There was the smoke from cigarettes in the house, and then there was the smell of smoke when he came home from being on call as a Toronto firefighter.

Fast-forward to the year I graduated from university—I think that was 1986—and I started my career as an Ontario government intern. What were people doing in their offices then? Smoking—smoking in Ontario government offices. But that was acceptable. It had been going on for quite a bit of time.

Then we had that transition that banned smoking in workplaces. It was a hard transition for some people, but over time, and especially based on what we learned about second-hand smoke, people got with the program, so to speak, just like they did with using seat belts and so on.

0920

Then, of course, we had the smoking sections. You all remember those: smoking sections in coffee shops and various spots. Even in hospitals there were smoking sections. There were smoking spots even on high school properties. We had a smokers' corner at West Hill Collegiate in Scarborough, where I went, where everyone went out to smoke. There was a smoking section outside the building in the Ferguson Block, in the Macdonald Block, where I worked when I first started my career. So things have changed.

Now, of course, things like smoking in cars and other places are generally viewed as completely unacceptable. So times change, attitudes change, and all of this is backed by what the experts tell us, and that's important.

Now, of course, it's important to our health. This is a very important piece of legislation to me, as the Minister of Children and Youth Services, because we want all of our children and youth to grow up happy and healthy and not to suffer ill effects of second-hand smoke.

Some people have raised questions about the existing framework but, as I said, things have changed over time. For example, the number of people in Canada who are legally able to possess marijuana for medical purposes under that federal framework is rising, and since the most common method of consumption of medical marijuana is indeed smoking, businesses and employers were grappling with how to provide safeguards for their patrons and for their employees exposed to second-hand medical marijuana smoke.

Also, the exemption we proposed for medical marijuana users under the Electronic Cigarettes Act triggered a number of events that really started a public debate. It

started a public debate about the acceptability of smoking or vaping and so on. Of course, we all know, too, that the federal government has committed to legalizing marijuana in Canada, which has heightened further discussion, public stakeholder interest and the controls that governments have to put in place to protect people from potential health harms associated with marijuana, be it medical or otherwise.

So things evolve, things change, and that is what we're here to do as legislators: to make sure that our legislation evolves and changes, given the realities of what's going on, not just in Ontario but in Canada, quite frankly, and what the experts are saying.

We do believe it has come to be the time to make some changes to the Smoke-Free Ontario Act that will enable the government to proscribe products and substances other than tobacco that would be subject to the no-smoking provisions. I think Ontarians get that. I think people in my community get that. I see this as very much the evolution of what has been going on in our society, what's been going on in terms of changing attitudes and what we know in terms of how smoking affects our health outcomes at the end of the day.

Thank you for this time, Speaker, and I look forward to listening to the rest of the debate.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Government House leader.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: Thank you very much, Speaker, for acknowledging me. I'm very glad to join the member from Ottawa South and the Minister of Children and Youth Services and the minister responsible for women's issues to talk about this very important bill, Bill 178, An Act to amend the Smoke-Free Ontario Act.

As I just mentioned briefly before, I'm very proud to come from the city of Ottawa and represent the community of Ottawa Centre, which has taken a leadership role when it comes to ensuring that our public spaces are healthy for everyone, that our public spaces are free from the negative impact of second-hand smoking.

Ottawa is a city that has taken that leadership role through its municipal council in banning smoking in public spaces, restaurants, and in bars, in particular. It was not an easy decision. It was very, very controversial at the time, as many may recall. But it has been a decision that has not only been very popular but, I would also say, it has been a decision that has impacted, in a positive way, the health of the citizens of Ottawa. It has also resulted in businesses growing because they have now been able to attract more people to come in because they have that healthy environment to present.

Similarly, Ottawa most recently took another very important leadership stand—and I'm very happy that it was incorporated in the Smoke-Free Ontario Act—and that was to prohibit smoking in outdoor spaces like patios. We know how important patios are. They are enclosed spaces, and the impact of second-hand smoking has been the same. Again, it was a very popular decision that has resulted in healthier places to live. That ban includes parks etc. as well.

I think the times that we live in right now, the conversation that is starting to take place when it comes to the use and the acceptance of using medical marijuana, which is allowed by law—the conversation that the federal government has embarked on, on taking the prohibition away from the recreational use of marijuana, really makes it imperative that we have this conversation now as to where those products can be used and what kind of second-hand impact it will have on other people, all the bystanders who may not use those products.

So I think what we are doing through this bill is what Ontario should be doing: taking a leadership role. We're actually really setting the standard when it comes to other products and substances, where they can be used and in what circumstances they can be used in public spaces. We're not telling people not to use it; that is not our place. What we can do, which is our role as legislators, is to make sure others are protected in our environment and in our community. That discussion around the use of medical marijuana, or the practice of the use of medical marijuana, and now the potential use of recreational marijuana, makes it very, very important. When I'm speaking to my constituents in my community, this is an issue that is coming up. It's a conversation that is taking place on a regular basis.

As many know, I knock on doors in my community every weekend on Saturdays. I'm out talking to constituents, and this is a conversation we're having. And I will also be frank with you, Speaker: You hear both sides. I would say a majority of my constituents in my community of Ottawa Centre very much support legislation like this. They want to make sure that they are shielded from the second-hand impact of the use of medical marijuana or recreational marijuana. They appreciate the leadership role that the provincial government is taking in a proactive manner to ensure that the Smoke-Free Ontario Act is not just limited to tobacco products and that it actually is expanded in its scope.

But I want to acknowledge that there are others who think this may be going too far, especially those who use medical marijuana, because there is a medical reason for them to use it. I acknowledge that, and very quickly, I want to address that by saying of course this bill does not prevent them or prohibit them from using medical marijuana for medical purposes, as has been prescribed to them by their medical practitioner. What it is doing is limiting where they can use that product.

Just as we are concerned about the health of the individual who has been prescribed the use of medical marijuana, we also as legislators have to think about and be concerned with the health of others in their surroundings who would be exposed to second-hand smoke. We know that our restaurants and our public places are open to our children, open to other elders and seniors—all kinds of people, vulnerable or not. We have a duty and an obligation to make sure that we look to their well-being and health as well.

In my opinion, this bill is doing something very simple. This bill is doing something thoughtful. What this

bill is doing is taking leadership in a very real discussion that is taking place in our country, and that is to make sure that, just like the kind of regime we have created around smoking in public spaces, we extend that prohibition to other products and substances as well, such as the use of marijuana, medical or recreational—whenever that second part becomes legal.

Speaker, I think this is the right thing to do. We know the benefits from the Smoke-Free Ontario Act and how it has resulted in a healthier province. I think we stand on solid ground from an evidentiary point of view, that we are making the right public policy choice. I really encourage all members to support this bill, because I think Ontarians support this approach. I look forward to voting in support of this bill, and I urge other members to do the same.

0930

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

Mr. Jim McDonell: I'm proud to rise to bring the thoughts of my constituents in Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry. Bill 45 was rushed through with a lack of consultation, and now we see the results of that: the government coming back to fill in some of the holes. We see that in so many bills in this House.

I sit on committee; I think we're going through Bill 172. There's a perception of wanting to listen if stakeholders come through, but, really, there are a lot of important amendments that are being pushed out of the way. You have a government that doesn't seem to want to listen. It shouldn't take an embarrassment to force them to come back, with people screaming and, in this case, laughing at some of the mistakes that have been made here.

We see it. I think the member from Huron–Bruce talked about the Green Energy Act and the promise in my riding and across the province that they would listen to the local groups. It was an oversight; they were taking a lot of pressure. "If you're an unwilling host, we won't go there." Of course, in North Stormont and in Glengarry–Prescott–Russell: two installations in areas that were unwilling hosts. Communities that put their faith in what the Liberal government said of course have been burned. It's too bad.

We'll go through a lot of important legislation over the next few weeks. The cap-and-trade bill is being pushed through. I hope they listen to some of the stakeholders that are coming through and clearly saying they're worried about the effects on our economy and our ability in the future, if we don't get it right, to actually make a difference. They're pushing it through, and we see that it's clearly only a tax because they're out of money. That shouldn't be what this bill is all about. It should be about reducing carbon. We'll work to see that our stakeholders are heard when we move to that bill.

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

Miss Monique Taylor: It's always a pleasure and an honour to be able to stand in this House and to have a few moments to comment on a government bill that has been brought forward. It's been said many times already in this House that this bill is only before us because of the government's lack of due diligence when it came to making sure that it got the first bill, Bill 45, right.

This bill adds four words, "prescribed products and substances," to Bill 45. Quite frankly, it's just an amendment to the bill that was before us.

It was interesting to listen to some of the government members speak to this bill. The Minister for Children and Youth Services talked about how this bill is important to make sure that people are happy and healthy—and the ill effects of second-hand smoke. She talks about people being happy and healthy. I wish she would feel the same way when it came to children over the age of five who suffer from autism.

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: That's not what we're talking about this morning.

Miss Monique Taylor: But it is a health consideration, Minister.

I've obviously picked a bone, Speaker. As you can see, the autism effect on people in this province has filtered long and far. I hope she's read the letters that I have delivered to her so that she can hear from families firsthand of their situation of happy and healthy, and how they're feeling about that. We know very well that IBI is most effective between the ages of two and four, but it does not mean that it is not effective at all after the age of five.

Interjections.

Miss Monique Taylor: Speaker, this is fantastic to have this much—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Point of order, Minister?

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: On a point of order, Speaker: I'm completely unclear about what the member is talking about and what that has to do with the bill at hand, which is the Smoke-Free Ontario Act. I'm happy to talk to her about her other issues any time, getting a briefing, but I don't know what this conversation has to do with the bill in front of us.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The minister is correct.

Your time is up. I would suggest to the member from Hamilton Mountain that she stick to the agenda. All members know, if they have a problem, they can stand up on a point of order at any time. Instead of yelling at the Speaker, they might want to stand up.

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: I did.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): You did finally, after a while.

Anyway, questions and comments?

Hon. Michael Coteau: It's great to be here this Wednesday morning. I would love to come into the Legislature at 9 o'clock in the morning one day and actually have the opposition stand up and say, "You know what? You guys are doing a great thing."

This bill is so simple. We're talking about smoking and we're talking about tobacco-based products. We're

talking about keeping people healthy here in the province of Ontario. If the opposition can't see clearly—well, you know what? I don't know what they've been reading or what they've been—

Interjections.

Hon. Michael Coteau: I think this is a pretty simple piece of proposed legislation. This is about keeping Ontarians healthy; it's about keeping Ontarians safe. To add to what the House leader was saying about going into local schools and talking to young children: When you go into the schools and talk about the role of an MPP, I always use the smoke-free Ontario example as one of the things we can do as lawmakers here in the Legislature to keep people safe. It wasn't too long ago in this province that you could have children in a car and actually light a cigarette. It's this government that made the changes to stop that.

We're just adding to our Smoke-Free Ontario Strategy here in the province of Ontario, yet the opposition stands up and they're talking about anything but a smoke-free Ontario. It's time for them to recognize the hard work that's taking place on this side of the House and the great work that's taking place to ensure that young people and people of all ages in the province of Ontario have the opportunity to stay healthy and to be safe, and to continue to build an environment where we protect each other.

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

Mr. John Yakabuski: I want to point out to the minister that it is the job of the opposition to point out the weaknesses in legislation, not the attributes. It is our job to do that. If we didn't do it, we wouldn't be doing our job.

But I do want to pay reference to the member from Ottawa South. He spoke this morning, wishing his mother a happy birthday. I want to chime in there—and it's got nothing to do with the bill, so I hope nobody interjects—that today would also be my mother's birthday. I will speak to the bill. My mother would be 92 today, if she was alive, but she died in 1974 from lung cancer. Ironically, because there are no guarantees, I'm certain that if maybe my mother smoked, she might have died younger than 50. But she died at the age of 50 from lung cancer, never having smoked in her life. She was just one of those people who was very unlucky. She probably worked herself to death, raising 14 kids, one of them being me, which was probably not the easiest thing to do.

I did want to reference that today, April 6, 2016, would be my mother's birthday. I will speak to the smoking aspect of it because, yes, there was smoking in our house and there was smoking in our place of business, the hardware store, which my mother laboured at for many years. When my dad was here in the Legislature, she was there at the hardware store all the time. In those days, the funny thing was, you'd be serving a customer and the customer and the person serving them—one of our people on the floor—would both have cigarettes in their hands or in their mouths and would be talking. The place was full of smoke all the time. Could that have had an impact on my mother's health? It's certainly likely that it did.

Any time we do things to make people healthy, I'm going to be in favour of it, but I will also take the opportunity to point out the weaknesses, the reasons or the problems behind the government's legislation. Thank you for this opportunity this morning. Happy birthday, Mom.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): One of the three speakers has two minutes. The government House leader.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: I want to thank the member from Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry, the member from Hamilton Mountain, the Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport, and the member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke for their remarks. Not all of them were on point, as the Speaker noted. Nonetheless, I want to acknowledge the very important role the opposition has to play to make government accountable and point out where things can be improved. Of course, we're debating a particular bill, not every single issue under the sun. There are moments to do that as well.

0940

But in terms of this bill, I'm hearing a general consensus—or, by not hearing talk about this bill, that there is a general consensus—that this bill is in the right direction, that this bill is addressing the right issue. That was very clear to me from what I heard from other members: We have a real issue at hand. Albeit, this is a very small bill and makes changes to three words, but they're three important words that are being changed.

It is expanding the scope of the Smoke-Free Ontario Act to ensure that the Smoke-Free Ontario Act does not just apply to tobacco products. It is making sure that the principles that are enshrined in the Smoke-Free Ontario Act, which are now universally accepted, which are now universally hailed in this province, which people actually are benefitting from and are getting healthier as a result of—what this bill is saying is, "Let's take that scope and now expand the same principle to other products and substances."

What do we mean by other products and substances? Right now, we mean the use of marijuana, be it medical marijuana, which is legally allowed by the federal government, or the potential use of recreational marijuana, which is being considered by the federal government as well. I think this is a logical step. This is the right step, and it's going to result in an even healthier Ontario, which is our mandate to do.

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

Mr. Randy Hillier: Before I debate Bill 178 and give evidence why I will not be supporting Bill 178, I should take this moment to say that it is Tartan Day in Ontario, and we need more tartans in our Legislative Assembly from the looks of things today. I do see my colleague from the great riding—with Scottish heritage—of Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry. He's got a bit of a tartan tie on there, I would think. Anyway, it's a pleasure to be

here on Tartan Day and wearing both suspenders and tie in tartan today.

Back to the bill: Bill 178 can't be discussed singularly; it must be talked about in conjunction with Bill 45. When we look at these two pieces of legislation, what I see is an attack on compassion. I see an attack on caring. I see an attack on people's health and I see an attack on reducing harm. That's what I see with these two bills, and I want to explain why.

Bill 178 now captures medicinal marijuana, or cannabis, under the Smoke-Free Ontario Act. Bill 45 also captures these things—vaporizers. These are now considered tobacco products under this Liberal government. What they basically have done is they've said, "We are legislating that apple trees are now orange trees in Ontario." The member from Eglinton–Lawrence, I believe, brought in a bill the other day to recognize a fruit as Ontario's vegetable. Evidence and reason are out the door with this Liberal government.

Let's put this in perspective. There are approximately 25,000 people taking medicinal marijuana in this province to alleviate the pain and suffering that they're experiencing due to illness or disease; they're alleviating their pain and suffering. Medicinal marijuana is recognized and prescribed for that function. It's everything from PTSD to epilepsy to people on chemotherapy. These people are enjoying a somewhat better life, less pain, because of medicinal marijuana. This bill now ostracizes and unduly restricts where they can take their prescription medicine, but it also prevents them from using less harmful methods, such as a vaporizer, to take that prescription. So we're taking away the harm-reduction component with Bill 45, and then we're also taking the cannabis itself and saying, "If you want to take your prescription, you must do it in the same place where people are smoking."

Just picture this. If you're in public housing, if you're in a condo building, a college dorm, if you're visiting in a hotel and you take prescription cannabis, you will not be allowed to do that. You can't do that in public housing; you can't do that in condos; you can't do it in a hotel or a motel with this bill. You certainly can't go to a cannabis or vape lounge, because they won't exist under this bill. So where do you go?

Here in Toronto, right at the moment, we have 13 vape lounges where people are taking their medicinal marijuana, often in devices something like this, in a less harmful fashion. Those vape lounges will now be extinct. They will not be allowed to operate.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Just a friendly reminder to the member: You can't use a prop. I let you go a couple of times already. Just keep it on the desk, please.

Mr. Randy Hillier: Thank you for those words, Speaker. I'm not using it as a prop; I'm trying to use it as an instructional. Does that look like marijuana? Does that look like a cigarette? It's an electronic device. It's not a prop, but I will not touch it and I will not hold it up. But it is important for members to understand what this legislation does.

So 25,000 medicinal marijuana users will now have to go outside and congregate with smokers to ingest their prescription.

I also want to say this: I've heard of a whole bunch of anecdotal stories and suggestions that people are smoking their medicinal marijuana on public transit, in taxis, in airplanes and in bars. I've not seen any evidence. I have never seen anybody smoking medicinal marijuana in any of those places—never. If somebody has, please jump in on the debate in the questions and comments and explain how often that has happened or where. I know of one case—one case only—where somebody wanted to use their medicinal marijuana and smoke it in a public restaurant. That was at Gator Ted's. There was a human rights action over that.

People are respectful. People are not out smoking medicinal marijuana in our public schools, or in our bars or restaurants. I take trains. I take planes. I go to restaurants. I have never seen that happen. So what problem are we actually solving with Bill 178? What problem? There's one example, Gator Ted's.

But in the process, we're doing so much harm. We're preventing people who are suffering from using in less harmful ways. We are putting them as outcasts.

I think there are probably a number of people in this House, a number of people in this province, who believe that medicinal marijuana is just some pretext to use it recreationally. I can tell you—and I'm sure there are many people in this House who know people who are suffering debilitating diseases and injuries—they are gaining some sense of a quality of life, being able to take prescription marijuana.

0950

I think this is important to emphasize: People are more than their illness and people are more than their disease. They're not just a cancer victim. They're not just a person who suffers from epilepsy. Whatever the affliction is, they still remain a person, a person who requires social interactions, who requires that interchange between people.

Bill 178 and Bill 45 ostracize those people. They make pariahs of those people. It's like we're going back to the 1800s or the 1700s with lepers, with Bill 178 and Bill 45: If you need to have a prescription, we're going to put you over in that corner where society can't see you and doesn't want to see you. That's not caring. It's not compassion. Obviously, under this bill, these vape lounges, these cannabis lounges, places where people can socialize and take their prescription, are outlawed. They're extinct.

I'll say to you, Speaker, that instead of promoting harm reduction, this Liberal government is promoting harm with Bill 178—promoting harm, not harm reduction. Instead of promoting health and healthy living, they're promoting poor health. They're promoting pain. They're promoting suffering for these people.

Interjection.

Mr. Randy Hillier: I see the Minister of Tourism thinks that it's funny that people are suffering; it's funny that people are suffering and that they will not be able to find a warm place in January to take their medication. There's nothing funny about this, nothing funny at all, in my view, for those people who are suffering.

Bear this in mind as well: That vaporizer that I showed earlier is now deemed a tobacco product as well, and the product inside of it, whether it be a marijuana extract, a caffeine extract or a vanilla extract, it's all deemed to be tobacco. An apple tree is now an orange tree. A fruit is now a vegetable in Ontario with this Liberal government.

Why would we prevent somebody from taking their prescription in a less harmful fashion? It ought to be obvious to the members on the Liberal side that the Supreme Court ruling just last year that stated our laws must accommodate and allow people to take their prescription drugs in the least harmful or in a less harmful fashion—our laws have to allow that. This law prevents it. It's absolutely contrary to a Supreme Court ruling.

I have no doubt that we will see Bill 178 and Bill 45 in front of the courts very soon. They will be challenged; they will be struck down. They'll be struck down because this Liberal government is not cognizant or compassionate about people. They're also not cognizant of the very laws that they make and the rulings that our courts bring out.

Here's an interesting research paper that was done. It was republished today in Reason magazine. The title is Lying About ... E-cigarettes Is Like Blocking Access to Clean Heroin Needles.

It goes on to say that this is "a blistering indictment of lying in the name of 'public health.'" Look at that: "lying in the name of 'public health.'"

Interjections.

Mr. Randy Hillier: I see that the Treasury Board thinks this is all funny as well, and that it's a laughing matter when we're talking about people's health and the government's undue restriction on allowing people to ease their suffering. It's unfortunate that the Deputy Premier thinks this is a laughing matter.

It goes on: "In a blistering indictment of lying in the name of 'public health,' two prominent tobacco researchers slam medical organizations and government agencies for suppressing information about the huge difference in risk between electronic cigarettes...."

The two authors wrote in the International Journal of Drug Policy. Lynn Kozlowski is a public health professor at the State University of New York in Buffalo, and David Sweanor is an adjunct law professor at the University of Ottawa. They both have come out and said that government is lying about public health.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Sit down. The member will withdraw what he just said. Well?

Mr. Randy Hillier: I withdraw.

Anyway, it's a research paper. Let me just read a little bit more about this, and I'll try to make sure that I include only parliamentary language out of this synopsis.

"Ignorance about the relative hazards of e-cigarettes, which are ... something like 95% safer than" conventional smoking, "is also widespread, thanks largely to pronouncements from government agencies and anti-smoking groups that are unhelpful at best and downright false at worst."

I would encourage members on the Liberal side, and also members on this side, to actually take a look and read and research this on their own. Don't just accept the talking points from their party. Do some independent research, and we'll see.

How do they reconcile this fact that medicinal marijuana is a recognized prescription medicine, but at the same time, they're going to unduly limit, restrict and prevent people from taking it? As I said at the beginning, where is this great outcry? Where is this great body of evidence that people are smoking medicinal marijuana on the planes and the trains and the automobiles? I haven't seen it. I've never seen anything in the papers about somebody offended because somebody was smoking medicinal marijuana on a plane or on a train or on a bus. I haven't seen those stories.

I have seen one story—one story: Gator Ted. It was funny; it was interesting. In that Human Rights Tribunal case, the Human Rights Tribunal said they had to allow this gentleman, Gator Ted, to have access to his medicinal marijuana, even if it contravened provincial law.

Interjections.

Mr. Randy Hillier: I find it interesting that the Liberal ministers find humour and find this all funny when we're debating Bill 178, when we're debating a significant bill. It's a short bill, but it has powerful consequences when it's combined with Bill 45. If Bill 45 didn't exist, you might go for it, but reducing and eliminating harm reduction through Bill 45 with Bill 178 is an absolutely compounding and conflicting set of laws that will be challenged.

1000

I had a group of people in to see me—the Cannabis Friendly Business Association, the vape association, the Canadian Vaper, the Tobacco Harm Reduction Association of Canada—thousands and thousands of people, and I know that this Liberal government is receiving thousands and thousands of complaints on their actions. They're going to drag taxpayers' money through the courts, and they're going to lose. They would be wise to sit back and take a look at people and act in a caring and compassionate manner.

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

Mr. Taras Natyshak: I'm pleased to listen to the comments from our colleague from Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington. He raised some important points—some maybe a little bit off the mark. Nevertheless, I think the overall theme of his discourse was that the government was inept and, frankly, incompetent in the development of this bill initially, when it was Bill 45, that incarnation of the bill. There's been no contrition. What we're hearing is laughter from the government

side. They're laughing at the fact that they're wasting time in here, laughing all the way, knowing full well that their incompetence has led to a waste of time in this Legislature that should be used to talk about substantive issues that support our communities—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Stop the clock. I guess I don't have to tell you, do I? No yelling across the floor. Thank you.

Continue.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: When they start yelling like that, you know you've hit a nerve, frankly.

We've seen this time and time again. What could they have done to avoid this? Maybe some discussion, some consultation with those stakeholders who clearly knew you were making a mistake. They cut off debate. They called closure on the bill, didn't listen to the public because, in their world, in their bubble, Liberals know best. They're going to do it with campaign finance reform. They're going to mess it up again, undoubtedly. We know that. They're too busy with their fundraisers. They're busy selling off public assets. They can't even get the basic fundamentals of this bill right. There are four words that they're changing here: "prescribed products and substances."

What a complete failure that we're in this House right now, having to watch them, without any contrition, laugh and laugh as we try to fight for real substantive issues in this House. It's a sad day, Speaker.

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

Hon. James J. Bradley: The legislation that's before us, I believe, with a few exceptions, from what I've heard in the debate taking place, is going to be supported by all three of the political parties in the Legislature, if not by all members. I think that's because there's a recognition that this legislation is needed.

First of all, I think people were pleased that, overall, the legislation dealt with the traditional smoking that we saw happening in the province, and there's been a significant change taking place over the years. Those of us who are sports fans, for instance, will recall that we would go into an arena and the announcement would be made, "No smoking in the arena proper. Smoking in corridors and lobbies only." If you went out there, you didn't have to smoke, you simply had to breathe, and you'd be the same as a person who would be smoking.

There have been many changes taking place. Some of the arenas, when they banned smoking, which I thought may never happen, in places like the old Maple Leaf Gardens, for instance, now don't even allow, in many cases, people to go outside to smoke between periods. We recognize as well that when we used to go into bars or restaurants or even on airplanes, smoking was allowed, and now it is not. This transformation is taking place.

The bill addresses some circumstances that may not have been contemplated. I think there's a time to spend a lot of time on some legislation before the House. I'm a person who believes that we should rate the various bills with the opposition and say, "We'll spend a lot of time on this bill, and not so much time on another."

I think this bill lends itself, with the support of the three parties, to passage in the House so that we can deal with other matters which are of great significance—not suggesting this isn't—and I hope we will be able to do that.

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

Mr. John Yakabuski: It's a pleasure to follow my colleague from Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington this morning. The one thing I'll say about my friend from LFLA: He's never afraid to stand in this House or anywhere else and be the voice for people who feel they don't have a voice. In our democratic system, I think that's extremely important. Sometimes it's not easy to paddle against the current. I'll say to my friend Mr. Hillier that he has never been shy about paddling against the current, even if sometimes that's a rapid he's trying to go against the flow on.

Having said that, he raises a significant, important issue. No matter what piece of legislation we bring forth as government or in opposition, whatever piece of legislation comes before this House, there's always an element about that piece of legislation that will be viewed or can be shown in a very empirical way to be restrictive for one group or another group of people.

I happen to be one of the people who generally take the position that the benefit of the greater number—the benefit of all, as we say—trumps the rights of the few. Having said that, I think it's important in our system that there are always people who are willing to take the other view and say that the rights of the few cannot be trumped simply because a piece of legislation is designed to be for the good of all. That is something that my colleague from Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington has never been shy about doing, and I take my hat off to him and congratulate him for taking sometimes an unpopular stance on a challenging issue.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Before I move to the next question, I'd like to remind members that when they come into this House and leave it, they're supposed to acknowledge the Chair. There's a particular couple who haven't been doing it all day.

Questions and comments?

Mr. Peter Tabuns: It's a pleasure to rise to address the comments made by our colleague from Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington. I always have to have a note in front of me. I have to tell the member from that riding that there are a lot of people who find it very difficult to get all the way through that title; no question about it.

There are two elements here, Speaker. One is that when it was first announced by the parliamentary assistant that people would be able to smoke medical marijuana in many places where they wouldn't be able to smoke tobacco, that very day I got blasted by cab drivers, restaurant owners and others who said, "I've got nothing

against people smoking marijuana. It's going to be legalized. It's probably a good thing." But they didn't want to smoke the second-hand smoke. It's as simple as that.

So I think it makes sense that we look for the way that we can accommodate and assist people who need that medication for their health, for pain control or for seizure control, but it also has to be very clear that people who don't want to be smoking things on a second-hand basis should not be put in a situation where they are. It's not a good thing. There is going to have to be regulation and control on this.

The second thing I want to say, though, is that my colleague from Nickel Belt spoke very well yesterday for an hour and others have had an opportunity to address a similar line of argument today. We went through this with Bill 45, which left out four critical words in that bill, and we're back here again. Really? She also made the point that shisha, the smoking of water pipes, is not regulated. Frankly, it's something that is now being addressed here in Toronto. I think it will be addressed in other municipalities.

We're—sorry, not we; the government, the Liberals, are once again doing exactly what they've done within the last 12 months: ignoring a huge issue, thinking that they have figured it all out and it's going to be dealt with. It ain't gonna be.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington has two minutes.

Mr. Randy Hillier: I want to thank the members from Essex, Danforth, the minister without portfolio and my colleague from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke for their comments. They were thoughtful and it was enjoyable to hear their comments.

I do want to say one thing about Bill 178 and Bill 45. I agree with the member for Danforth. There have to be greater restrictions than what are in place at the present time. But this government has gone to the complete extreme. Now, it is closing down those few social locations for people to take that medicinal marijuana—the vape shops, the cannabis lounges. Those fall under this as well.

I'll grant you the taxis; I'll grant you the buses and all those things. But there needs to be accommodation, and this bill does not provide accommodation. It takes all accommodation away.

Contrary to the minister without portfolio and his comments—it appears that he believes that this bill is going to fix the problems of the 1970s, as he speaks about Maple Leaf Gardens and the smoke-filled corridors of Maple Leaf Gardens. Well, we know that Maple Leaf Gardens doesn't even exist anymore—

Mr. Todd Smith: It's a Loblaws.

Mr. Randy Hillier: It's a Loblaws—but we also know that none of our arenas, none of our sporting venues, allow for smoking in them anyway. We got rid of those things.

Bill 178 can't be used to address the problems of the 1970s. It needs to be used to address the circumstances and the conditions that we face today. Medicinal marijuana was also not available in the 1970s, but it is available today. We need to accommodate people and help them alleviate their pain and suffering.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

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

The House recessed from 1012 to 1030.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: It is my profound pleasure to introduce today a series of guests who have come to support Rowan's Law. Brian Stemmle is a retired Canadian skier who went to four Olympics for our country, and we're very pleased that he's here. We also have John Goodchild. We have Rowan Stringer's parents, Kathleen and Gord Stringer, and then someone who needs no introduction in this room, probably one of Canada's greatest hockey legends of all time, Eric Lindros. I'd like to welcome them to the assembly.

I have a little bit more to add, because at 11:30 today in the side room of the legislative dining room, I'm inviting all MPPs to come and meet with Brian Stemmle as well as Eric Lindros, to talk about concussions, have a little bit of light lunch and get some autographs.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Not to take anything away from this wonderful day that you've organized, but coming from Brantford, I thought, "Wayne Gretzky's not a bad player too."

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: But he's not here.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I just thought I'd put that in.

The Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities.

Hon. Reza Moridi: It's my great pleasure to welcome Sharon Maloney, CEO of Career Colleges Ontario, and John Nelson, board chair; Luisa Tanzi, treasurer; and Tim Heggie, executive committee member of Career Colleges Ontario.

Career colleges are a great part of post-secondary education in our province of Ontario. Please join me in welcoming them.

M^me^ Gila Martow: Bonjour, monsieur le Président. Everybody here knows the French words "déjà vu," so it's a bit of déjà vu. I get the chance again today to souhaiter la bienvenue à M^lle^ Amanda Simard. Elle est conseillère de la municipalité de Russell dans la circonscription de Glengarry–Prescott–Russell. Elle est ici dans la galerie des membres. Bienvenue.

Hon. Jeff Leal: In the public gallery today are students from my alma mater in Peterborough, Trent University. We have Ashley Fearnall, Belicia Davila, Emmanuel Gasore, Justin Thompson, Chanté White, Erin Ford, Rebecca Hubble, Avori Purdy, Jessica Cole, Annette Pedlar, Theresa Benedict, Veronique Boucher and Kristina Dergacheva—very nice people from Trent University.

Mr. Yvan Baker: I'd just like to welcome Dane Grgas, who's here from my community. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde: I would like to welcome, in our Legislature, on behalf of the Honourable Charles Sousa, MPP for Mississauga South, page captain Sohan Van de Mosselaer. His mother and grandmother are here: Dr. Mili Roy and Jaya Roy. Welcome to the Legislature.

Mr. Todd Smith: I'd like to welcome Daniel Perry, a Loyalist College student, who is joining us here again today. Being from Belleville, I would also like to point out that Bobby Hull wasn't too bad either.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I'm sorry I started it.

Further introductions?

Mr. Monte McNaughton: I'd like to welcome friends from Career Colleges Ontario who are with us today: George Hood, J.P. Roszell, Paul Kitchin, and Adriana.

Mr. Yvan Baker: I'm not sure if they're here yet, but I just wanted to welcome the students from Kipling Collegiate Institute, who are from my riding of Etobicoke Centre and visiting Queen's Park today.

Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde: It's again a great pleasure to welcome in our Legislature, on behalf of Mike Colle, MPP for Eglinton–Lawrence, page captain Maya Treitel. Her mother, Wendy; father, Natan; and sister, Gabriel are here, and also her grandparents Donnatee and David. They will be in our public gallery today, and I would like all of us to welcome them.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: Speaker, I've been informed that, apparently, today is your birthday. If that's the case, I want to wish you happy birthday from all the members. Happy birthday, Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): As you get older, it's really not all that important.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: It beats the alternative.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Being on the right side of the grass is a good thing.

Further introductions?

Mr. John Vanthof: I'd like to welcome a couple of our friends from the OFA. Everybody knows Don. Welcome to Queen's Park once again.

ORAL QUESTIONS

FUNDRAISING

Mr. Patrick Brown: My question is for the Premier. Despite the Premier's new-found interest in fundraising reform, it does not fix the years of shady quotas and tainted money—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): My standing is a signal that I'm not going to tolerate outbursts.

Please finish.

Mr. Patrick Brown: Despite the Premier's new-found interest in fundraising reform, it does not fix the years of shady quotas and tainted money that has been raised by the Ontario Liberal Party. The people of Ontario need to know if government contracts and grants were traded for donations to the Ontario Liberal Party.

Mr. Speaker, just as Quebec did, will the Premier immediately call a commission of inquiry? Yes or no?

Interjections.

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

Before I go to the Premier, I'm just going to let you know that I reviewed yesterday, and we seem to be weaving in and out of questioning one's motive. I'm going to caution everyone to make sure that those questions are directed in a way that does not impugn motive. Maybe, if I have to, I'll review what that means. But I'm sure that all members would appreciate either side not to impugn a member, because that's not parliamentary. I'll just give you that as a caution, and I'll listen very carefully.

Premier.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I would just take the Leader of the Opposition back some years, actually, to 2007. We've already undertaken a number of initiatives to make elections more accountable and transparent. In 2007, we introduced third-party advertising rules for the first time. We introduced real-time disclosure for political donations. Other provinces are catching up with that.

I announced last June that we were committed to making further changes, which we're doing. I announced yesterday that our government plans on introducing legislation on political donations this spring, including a transition away from union and corporate donations. I look forward to the meeting with the opposition leaders on Monday.

I'm leading by example. I've decided to immediately cancel private—

Interjections.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I think you might want to hear this.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Answer.

Interjections.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: As I said—

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

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Sorry, Premier, your time is up.

Supplementary?

Mr. Patrick Brown: Back to the Premier: The question was about a commission of inquiry, like Quebec's. This is not a laughing matter. We have seen corruption charges laid against a senior Liberal operative. This government has had four active OPP investigations against them. Now it appears to the public that the government has traded favours for fundraising.

Mr. Speaker, if this government has nothing to hide, will the Premier call a commission of inquiry to investigate the connection between donations and the govern-

ment grants and policy changes? It is the right thing to do, Mr. Speaker, if the government has nothing to hide.

Interjections.

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

Premier?

1040

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Just to complete what I was saying, I've made a decision to immediately cancel upcoming private fundraisers. In fact, Mr. Speaker, as I told the media this morning, I cancelled one tonight. The money will go back to the people who were going to attend. Ministers can do small, high-value fundraisers, but there will be stipulations on that, Mr. Speaker. First of all, the event will be publicly disclosed before it occurs, in a way that the media would consider legitimate.

Secondly, Mr. Speaker, ministers will not be fundraising with stakeholders solely of their own ministry. We're making those changes immediately. I look forward to the conversation with the leaders of the opposition parties on Monday as we talk about what the transition should look like.

Mr. Speaker, I would remind the Leader of the Opposition that we have all been functioning under the same rules. We have all been following the same rules, and now we're going to change those rules.

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

Mr. Patrick Brown: Mr. Speaker, back to the Premier: Political fundraising is legitimate; using government decisions to fundraise isn't. Cancelling the secret fundraisers is nothing more than a PR stunt. No other party does secret, private fundraisers. This is a PR stunt to divert attention from the perception that the Liberal Party has become synonymous with backroom money and backroom deals. The—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Now, this is the point that I was making: We're getting dangerously close to imputing motive. However, given the circumstances, I'm going to try to ask all members to stay away from that. If it gets too close, I'm going to pass the question.

Finish, please.

Mr. Patrick Brown: Mr. Speaker, the government can heckle and scream as loud as they want. They may have an aversion to facts, but the reality is the Liberal Party has become synonymous with backroom money and backroom deals.

The people of Ontario want the truth to come out, Mr. Speaker. Will the government do the right thing? Will the Premier, if she has nothing to hide, immediately call a commission of inquiry? It is the right thing to do; please do the right thing.

Interjections.

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

Hon. Brad Duguid: You're the dealmaker, Mr. Flip-flop.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I'm not amused with what I just heard.

Premier?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Deputy Premier.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Speaker, our government believes that creating a fair and just society is the highest responsibility that we have here. Part of that means that the tax code is fair to Ontarians.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Oh, come on. Talk about the pot calling the kettle black.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Deputy Premier?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Interestingly, the very first private member's bill that the Leader of the Opposition tabled when he came to this House was one that gave a tax break to Ontario's wealthiest citizens by abolishing the tax act, Speaker. That's the kind of regressive tax policy that Republicans are famous for south of the border.

Speaker, because of the rules we introduced in 2007, we can actually look at the facts to see who donated to the leadership campaign and whether those donations may have had any influence in that very first act in this Legislature. So, just pointing out the facts, the member received—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Time's up.

New question.

FUNDRAISING

Mr. Patrick Brown: Mr. Speaker, my question is once again to the Premier. The Hydro One sale is a perfect example of why we need a commission of inquiry. When the Liberals decided to sell Hydro One, the syndicate made $29 million. The syndicate then held a reception to give the Liberal Party $165,000 in donations.

Now, with the Liberals' latest announcement, they are selling 10.9 million more shares to that same syndicate, not the general public. Mr. Speaker, did the syndicate ask for this sweet deal at the last Liberal thank-you dinner?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Deputy Premier.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: As I was saying, the Leader of the Opposition started his career at Queen's Park by advocating for a reduction and elimination of estate taxes. Speaker, the member received $10,000 from Michael Vukets and Associates. They specialize in estate planning. He received $25,000 from Canaccord Genuity Group, a wealth management company, and he received $5,000 from SJC Investments, an international investment company.

Because of the changes we made in 2007, this information is available for all to see. But it is passing strange that the very first action that this leader took when he became a member of Legislature was to advocate for tax breaks for the very wealthiest Ontarians.

Interjections.

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

Supplementary?

Mr. Patrick Brown: I fail to understand, when we're talking about Liberal donations, why they're talking

about the Liberal increase to the death taxes. It's about muddying the waters and diverting the conversation.

I realize the Premier may not want to be on the record on this. It's easy to pass it off to another minister. It's a difficult conversation. It looks like a publicly owned asset is being sold for private Liberal donations. One-time Liberal gains equal years of financial pain when we lose the revenues from Hydro One. Why can't the syndicate buy their shares, like every other person or company in Ontario? It must have been because of those secret, private dinners.

Mr. Speaker, was the $165,000 in donations to the Liberal Party in exchange for access to Hydro One shares? I would appreciate if the Premier would go on the record herself, rather than avoiding the question.

Interjections.

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

Deputy.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Well, Speaker, what I would appreciate, and what I expect all Ontarians would appreciate, is if the Leader of the Opposition followed the lead of the Premier and cancelled the private fundraising dinners that he has planned.

I can remind you: April 19, you will be at the Albany Club with 10 people—only 10 guests—at $10,000 a plate. I would hope that you would cancel that dinner. There's another one, on May 4, at Barberian's, a bargain-basement, $5,000-a-plate dinner.

I do not understand how the Leader of the Opposition, with a straight face, can call on this government to make changes when he is not prepared to walk the walk himself. Speaker, I'm calling for the Leader of the Opposition to cancel those dinners.

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

Mr. Patrick Brown: Mr. Speaker, back to the Premier: Unlike the government, we don't have private fundraisers. I put them out on social media immediately after.

Is their definition of private fundraisers—is this where they discuss the terms of the contracts?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Order, please. I could try to ask the members for their co-operation because I would possibly look at it as a birthday present.

I'm allowing this to–and–fro to happen because I think you need to have an opportunity to get it out, except to say that I really do need to hear what's going on.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I'm in the middle of a sentence—in the middle of a sentence.

Finish, please.

Mr. Patrick Brown: This government insists that they make policy free from the influence of Ontario Liberal Party donors, yet we see $165,000 dinners secretly raising money for a party, from a group getting preferential access to the Hydro One shares. This arrangement is the very thing the people of Ontario have come to despise about this government.

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Only a public inquiry will clear the air, but until the Premier agrees to that, the people deserve an answer to the following: How much money will the syndicate be pressured to donate after this next payday, and what will be given in exchange?

Once again, we would like the Premier on the record rather than passing the buck. Do the right thing: Answer the question on the public inquiry.

Interjections.

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

Deputy?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Minister of Economic Development, Employment and Infrastructure.

Hon. Brad Duguid: Mr. Speaker—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Excuse me. I'm not impressed.

Hon. Brad Duguid: Mr. Speaker, the innuendo of the Leader of the Opposition is totally unfounded.

The broadening of the ownership of Hydro One has been complex and multi-stage. It has been essential for the government to have financial and legal advisers working on this project to ensure the interests of Ontarians are protected. By having the strongest professional expertise, we're ensuring Ontarians receive maximum value for their investment. The underwriters, the financial institutions that we used, which we've engaged for this offering, have been selected in an open and transparent manner to ensure that the process has been done in a very important and very crucial way.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Answer?

Hon. Brad Duguid: We've engaged the former Auditor General of Canada, Denis Desautels, to develop a competitive process for selecting the lead financial—

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

New question.

FUNDRAISING

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: My question is to the Premier. The Members' Integrity Act states: "A member of the assembly shall not accept a fee, gift or personal benefit that is connected directly or indirectly with the performance of his or her duties of office."

The Legislative Assembly Act states that a member shall not "knowingly accept or receive ... any fee, compensation or reward for or in respect of the drafting, advising upon, revising, promoting or opposing any bill."

The Liberals have created a system where ministers have to use their cabinet portfolios to raise money to meet fundraising quotas set by the Premier and the Liberal Party of Ontario. Has the Premier received legal assurances that the cabinet members' fundraising quota does not break the Members' Integrity Act?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Let me once again just say that there has been a set of rules in place, and all

parties have followed those rules. We've followed them to the letter, Mr. Speaker.

But now we're going to change the rules. In fact, I've been clear that we were going to change those rules. I said last June that we were on track to change those rules. We're going to bring in legislation in the spring.

I look forward to the opportunity to speak with the leaders of the opposition parties to get their input. I think it's an important part of the process to hear from them, because quite frankly, up until a couple of days ago, I didn't hear anything from the leaders of the opposition. I started saying we needed to do this last June. I haven't heard anything from the leader of the third party or the Leader of the Opposition on the specifics of how they would move to make a change to the rules.

I look forward to the conversation on Monday.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: The Ministers of Energy and Finance wrote the legislation to sell off Hydro One. Then they hired a group of bankers and lawyers to help them actually sell off Hydro One. Then the ministers hosted a fundraiser with those very same bankers and lawyers. The group of bankers and lawyers benefitted from the sale; the ministers benefitted from the fundraiser.

Can the Premier not understand how this is wrong and may very well violate the Members' Integrity Act?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Again, I'll just go over the changes that we are going to be bringing forward and the changes that we're making right now, because as I said, we're going to bring in legislation in the spring. That legislation will include a transition away from corporate and union donations. It's on that transition that I'm interested in hearing from the leaders of the opposition parties, because as I say, we have all been following the same rules. We are all going to be making a transition to a new set of rules.

I'm making some immediate changes now. I've made the decision to immediately cancel upcoming private fundraisers that I attend. In fact, as I told the media, I cancelled one tonight. The ministers will still be able to do small group fundraisers—high-value fundraisers—but there will be two stipulations. One is that it's publicly disclosed before the event, not after the event, as the Leader of the Opposition suggested, and the ministers will not be meeting solely with stakeholders—

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

Final supplementary.

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: I'm concerned that ministers assigned fundraising quotas by the Premier are using their portfolios to raise money for the Liberal Party. As such, I will be making—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Deputy House leader, second time.

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: —a complaint to the Integrity Commissioner.

Will the Premier agree to participate and ensure that her whole cabinet agrees to fully participate in any investigation?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Deputy Premier.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: As the Premier has already said, we've taken a number of steps to make elections more accountable and more transparent, and to make donations more transparent. In 2007, we introduced third-party advertising rules for the first time and introduced real-time disclosure for political donations.

The NDP has been critical of our attempts to actually ban corporate and union donations. That's kind of surprising because that's exactly the kind of reform that the NDP in Alberta made. They introduced an act to renew democracy in Alberta. She introduced legislation, and then it was sent to committee for public consultations.

Here in Ontario, we're actually consulting before we draft the legislation, before we introduce the legislation, because we think it's important that we get this right. That's why the Premier has invited party leaders to come and have the conversation before the legislation is introduced, unlike the NDP in Alberta.

PRIVATIZATION OF PUBLIC ASSETS

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: The question is again to the Premier. This week, the Liberals agreed that they made a mistake by doubling the cost of medication for seniors in Ontario. Will they also admit they made a mistake by selling Hydro One and stop the sell-off of the next batch of shares?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: We are committed to investing in infrastructure in this province. It is not possible for Ontario to continue to lead and to take its strong and rightful position in the global economy if we don't invest in infrastructure.

Now, I know—and it is surprising—that the third party, the NDP, has not taken a strong position on investment in infrastructure. It's the kind of thing that one would have expected from the NDP, that they would support investment in public transit and investment in roads in the north and investment in communities so that they could upgrade their infrastructure. That's not the position that the NDP has taken, which is surprising, but it is our position. We need to make those investments. The broadening of the ownership of Hydro One—one asset—in order to invest in new assets is exactly what's needed in this province at this time.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: No one believes that selling off Hydro One is going to help our infrastructure. Everyone knows that it's going to put us in a worse position. The Financial Accountability Officer has stated that very clearly. No one buys that story.

The Liberals made a decision to hurt over a million seniors in Ontario. They backed away from that decision. Selling Hydro One won't just hurt seniors, it will hurt people across the province.

Of course, selling off Hydro One does help the donors who attended the fundraiser with the Ministers of Energy and Finance. We understand why you're doing it, but why is the Premier backing off from a decision that hurt over a million seniors, but doubling down on a decision to sell Hydro One, which will not only hurt the seniors,

but will hurt the rest of the 14 million people who live in this province?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: As I travel this province and talk to community leaders, one of the very top priorities that community leaders have is investment in infrastructure. It doesn't matter whether I'm in a small northern community or a large, growing urban community in southern Ontario, the reality is that municipalities have not been able to make the investments that they need—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Hamilton East–Stoney Creek, second time.

1100

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: They need the provincial support to invest in infrastructure that, quite frankly, was neglected for decades. So we're making those investments. It is a fundamental part of our economic plan.

I would say to the third party that we are leading Canada in terms of economic growth this year. We have been, for two years running, the leader in North America in foreign direct investment. The investments we're making are bearing fruit, and that's good for jobs today and it's good for the economy going forward.

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

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: Selling 15% of Hydro One was bad. Selling 30% is worse. It's going to end up costing us billions of dollars, which will mean cuts to infrastructure and public services—not building them up—not just today, but for future generations. Eight in 10 Ontarians are against this sell-off.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Member from Beaches–East York, second time.

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: It's bad for managing our electricity system. It will hurt the fight against climate change.

I know that the Premier is having a rough week, but will she make it better for all of us, and herself, and agree not to sell off any more of Hydro One?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: It's very surprising to hear the NDP say that investment in public transit will hurt greenhouse gas emission reduction. It is absolutely, absolutely flawed logic.

The reality is that those are the kinds of investments that we absolutely have to make. We have to promote the investment in infrastructure that will allow electric vehicles to flourish in this province. We have to invest in more public transit so that, as part of our climate change reduction strategy, we actually see those reductions in greenhouse gas emissions.

Quite the contrary to what the NDP is saying, the fact that we are making those investments is part of our economic plan that is going to allow us to thrive in a clean, greener economy, something they should be supporting.

Interjections.

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

New question.

FUNDRAISING

Mr. Todd Smith: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and happy birthday.

My question this morning is for the President of the Treasury Board. Last week, we learned that a treasury board president was engaged in questionable practices regarding potential influence peddling—

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

Mr. Todd Smith: That was in Quebec, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Oh. Well, you mention Quebec if it's there.

Interjections.

Mr. Todd Smith: Sam Hamad—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): It doesn't matter. I asked you to withdraw.

Mr. Todd Smith: Withdraw.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Now you can correct yourself, if you wish.

Mr. Todd Smith: Thank you very much. That was in Quebec, and Sam Hamad was forced to resign.

Last week, we learned that $165,000 changed hands between the Minister of Finance and the syndicate that underwrote the Hydro One sell-off. Yesterday, we learned that those same banks are getting a private opportunity to buy an additional $10 million in Hydro One shares—10 million Hydro One shares. Let me correct my record again.

Speaker, how does the minister explain this $165,000 kickback from the big banks?

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

Mr. Todd Smith: Withdraw.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Minister of Economic Development, Employment and Infrastructure.

Hon. Brad Duguid: That kind of question is just irresponsible. The fact of the matter is, this entire process is being done by third parties. There is no involvement whatsoever by the government in this process.

In fact, the process is completely being reviewed by the former Auditor General of Canada, Denis Desautels—I don't know if I'm saying his name right, Madame Meilleur.

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: Close enough.

Hon. Brad Duguid: He has been involved in this from day one.

It has been developed as a competitive process, and they've selected lead financial firms to carry it out. The member knows this. It's totally arm's-length to government. We have no input into that process whatsoever.

So stop the allegations that are totally unfounded, and be responsible in your questions about a very important matter of public policy.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Todd Smith: The facts are the facts, and the facts are out there on the table, in this case. It's nice to know

that the big banks feel that they're getting their money's worth from this government. If this type of thing occurred with a contractor, he'd be up on fraud charges. If a lawyer did it, he'd go to jail. When Sam Hamad did it in Quebec, he had to step down as the Treasury Board president. He did the right thing in Quebec.

Can the Treasury Board president explain why it's more acceptable in Ontario than Quebec for a minister to be involved in a scheme like this one certainly appears to be?

Hon. Brad Duguid: If that is not borderline slanderous, Mr. Speaker, I don't know what is. You have absolutely no grounds to make those kind of allegations. You're making it up as you go along—

Interjections.

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

Hon. Brad Duguid: Mr. Speaker, the member's wild allegations are a smear to the former Auditor General of Canada, Denis Desautels, who was overseeing this process. It would indicate to you, Mr. Speaker, that it is completely being done in a third-party fashion. The government and our members have no involvement in this whatsoever.

It's totally irresponsible for you to make those kind of allegations. I'm really shocked because I know this member. He does have integrity, Mr. Speaker. For him to make those kinds of allegations, I have to suggest that he's really on the borderline of slander, and his integrity, I think, can be questioned by those types of—

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

New question.

FUNDRAISING

Ms. Catherine Fife: My question is to the Premier. The Premier has acknowledged her front bench have fundraising quotas that they have to meet. The bigger the cabinet portfolio, the bigger the quota. A suspicious person might wonder—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The deputy House leader is warned.

Finish, please.

Ms. Catherine Fife: The bigger the cabinet portfolio, the bigger the quota. A suspicious person might wonder how much of a cabinet assignment is based on merit and how much is based on a talent for fundraising.

Does the Premier take fundraising ability into consideration when she's assigning high-profile positions on that front bench?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Mr. Speaker, I will repeat what I have said, and that is that we have all operated under a set of rules.

I am incredibly proud of my whole team. Every member on these benches is part of a team. We all do our bit. They are talented, intelligent people, and I am lucky to have them as my colleagues. I respect every one of them. They all do their bit, as I expect members on the other benches do.

Part of our job is to raise funds so that our political parties can operate. We've done that with integrity. We've followed the same rules, and now those rules are going to change, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Catherine Fife: There is a huge difference between my $20 spaghetti dinner at the Legion that's open to everyone and the Hydro One—

Interjections.

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

Finish, please.

Ms. Catherine Fife: —and the Hydro One privatization donation party that the Liberal government hosts. There's a big difference.

Last week, the Premier was asked about ministerial fundraising quotas and she said, "You'll have to talk to the party." But, of course, the Premier isn't just the Premier. She's also the leader of the Liberal Party.

Was the Premier involved in setting her cabinet ministers' fundraising quotas?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Deputy Premier.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Well, it seems the member of the third party has forgotten that her party was part of an ethics probe into a $10,000 exclusive fundraiser they held in December. I'm not sure what was on the menu, but I bet it wasn't spaghetti.

1110

"Despite banning corporate donations in Alberta, Horwath asked Premier Notley to attend her fundraiser, marketed at corporations. Many of the corporations had business interests in Alberta." That's from the Alberta Ethics Commissioner's report in March. "The event even marketed that Premier Notley would attend and resulted in the highest-reported ticket price for an NDP fundraiser ever. The president of the Ontario NDP, Karla Webber-Gallagher, who was interviewed in the probe, confirmed that Bruce Logan, Horwath's senior adviser, made personal calls to prospective donors before putting anything in emails."

INVASIVE SPECIES

Ms. Sophie Kiwala: Through you, Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry. Invasive species pose a serious threat to our natural resources, our biodiversity and the economy of Ontario, significantly impacting delicate ecosystems and costing tens of millions of dollars every year. This is well known by Canada's top experts, including especially biology prof Shelley Arnott at Queen's University.

Managing the impacts of species like zebra mussels in Ontario is estimated to be about $75 million to $91 million per year. The city of Toronto estimates that it has spent at least $37 million over the last five years to cut and replace city-owned trees killed by the emerald ash borer.

Species like these and many others have the potential to do long-term damage to the economy of Ontario. Minister, can you please tell us what steps the province is taking to manage invasive species?

Hon. Bill Mauro: I want to thank the member for the question. She's raised the example of zebra mussels. It's a great example of how if we're not proactive when it comes to the issue of invasive species, there's significant ecological and economic devastation that can come to the province of Ontario.

We know in all likelihood that zebra mussels were introduced through ballast water in international tankers, but we also know there's an opportunity for success because there has not been another waterborne invasive introduced to Ontario waters in quite some time—in fact, in a number of years. That's primarily due to the changes in the rules that have been made by the federal government when it comes to the discharge of ballast water.

Being proactive is very important. In that regard, we take great pride in being the first and only jurisdiction with stand-alone legislation in Canada. That legislation has received royal assent. We've also invested in an invasive species centre in Sault Ste. Marie, which I had the opportunity to visit some time ago, that's doing great work on this file. More will be done.

I look forward to the supplementary.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Sophie Kiwala: Thank you to the minister for his answer.

Preventing invasive species from arriving and becoming established is critical in our fight against the growing threat that invasive species represent to Ontario. Species that are at risk of being introduced into our province, such as the Asian carp, have the potential to do long-lasting damage to our economic and environmental systems, such as impacting our $2.2-billion recreational fishing industry right here in Ontario.

Once established, it becomes more difficult to eradicate invasive species. Therefore, a rapid and coordinated response, a response that can reach across borders to new invasive species, is required.

Minister, can you tell us how the Invasive Species Act and other initiatives from the Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry allow the province, its partners and the public to address emerging invasive species?

Hon. Bill Mauro: Again, I want to thank the member for the question. She raises the example of the Asian carp. That is an invasive species that, if it reaches into Ontario waters, will be able to and will impact with untold devastation on our recreational fishing.

In that regard, I travelled to Chicago in early January. We had an opportunity to visit basically where the beachhead is being established to try to prevent the introduction of Asian carp into Ontario waters. We had opportunities to meet with the Army Corps of Engineers, which is doing the work and leading the charge on this, share with them best practices from Ontario's side and engage in whatever we can do to support the work that they're doing there.

We've already been working very closely with the Canada Border Services Agency in this regard, to try and do what we can at the border, but it's important for everybody to know that we're doing what we can. We have visited in Chicago to see what's going on there. We need to do all that we can. Our legislation will enable us, through powers contained and regulations that are coming, to do everything we can to prevent the introduction of Asian carp into Ontario waters as best we're able.

CONCUSSIONS

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: My question is for the Minister of Sport. Today, we have with us Canadian hockey legend Eric Lindros and four-time alpine skiing Olympian Brian Stemmle, who have joined us at Queen's Park to call for the passing of Rowan's Law so that Ontario will become the first jurisdiction in all of Canada to pass concussion legislation.

Severe brain injuries can cause depression and mental health issues. As we saw with Rowan's passing, they can even cause death. We cannot afford a delay in the passage of Rowan's Law because we need consistent protocols for treatment and, in the case of sports, the return to play. Depending on how you answer this, Minister, we may have a chance at getting Eric Lindros to play in the Legiskaters game on April 19.

Can the minister outline the steps he's prepared to take in order for Rowan's Law to become a reality?

Hon. Michael Coteau: Well, Mr. Speaker, if he's playing, I don't want to be in the net.

This is a very serious issue. I want to take a moment to thank the member opposite, the member from Ottawa South and the member from Kitchener–Waterloo for their leadership on this file because it's such an important issue. Safety in sport, without question, is something that our government takes very seriously.

I'd like to take a moment also, Mr. Speaker, to thank Rowan's parents, who are here, and, of course, Mr. Lindros and his wife, who are here, and the advocates who are supporting this initiative.

Rowan's Law is the first step towards increasing awareness, prevention, identification and management of concussion in sport. Like the member opposite said, this would be the first initiative in the entire country, the first strategy put in place to take on this very serious issue. I know the House leader would like to speak on this issue in the follow-up in regard to the process moving forward.

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

Supplementary?

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: I appreciate the support that the minister has given me and the Stringer family throughout this process. I'm sure he can agree, with the recent events in the NHL last week and the movie Concussion exposing the NFL this past winter, that it's now clear that Ontario can and must take a leadership role in concussion awareness, research and treatment. Rowan's Law will be the coordinating voice that will bring together experts to implement a series of coroner's inquest recommendations from Rowan Stringer's death from second impacts that are sustained by multiple concussions.

Would the minister consider hosting a round table with possible committee appointees this month in advance of the committee bill passage?

Hon. Michael Coteau: To the House leader.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: Again, I want to thank all the members who have been very actively working on this very important issue. I want to especially acknowledge Rowan's parents, who are here as well.

As we know—and I think the member who asked the question knows very well—there is a process by which the House leaders work in a very collaborative fashion when they discuss all matters that are brought before this House, including private members' bills. This is an issue that we've had the opportunity to speak about, and I'm sure there's going to be more opportunities when we'll be speaking about this bill and other important private members' bills before this House.

I very much look forward to having those constructive conversations so that we can find a way of passing this groundbreaking legislation. Of course, I look forward to that opportunity of speaking with my respective House leaders on this issue and other issues when it comes to making sure that all those relevant matters come to this House.

FUNDRAISING

Mr. Peter Tabuns: My question to the Premier: Last December, one of the banks that ran the initial sell-off of Hydro One promoted a $7,500-per-person fundraiser, offering private face time with the Minister of Finance and the Minister of Energy. One of the emails promoting the event specifically mentioned the Hydro One sale. The fundraiser attracted a select group of Bay Street players who stood to profit from the Hydro One sale, raising $165,000 for the Liberal Party. Later today, the Minister of Energy and Minister of Finance will announce the further sell-off of Hydro One. Should the public see the fundraiser as the quid and today's Hydro One sell-off as the quo?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Economic Development, Employment and Infrastructure.

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Hon. Brad Duguid: Mr. Speaker, with that line of questioning, I would echo words that you often say: We're getting into a race to the bottom, with those kinds of unfounded suggestions and allegations, which are completely contrary—and the member knows this—to the way that this entire transaction is taking place.

This government has taken a very thoughtful and strategic approach to ensure the best value for the benefits of Ontarians. That's why the allocation of these offerings is in the hands of professionals. That's why it's third-party. That's why our ministers and our government do not have anything to do with the way this transaction rolls out. I know the member knows that. I'm a little surprised he would try to allege something that simply is not true. I don't think it's a fair thing to say in this Legislature. I don't think it's a fair allegation.

Mr. Speaker, I think I've explained that the process is completely unfettered of any kind of political involvement.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Peter Tabuns: This whole sell-off is a race to the bottom, the whole damned thing.

Only the Liberal Party would try to distract from what has been seen as a pay-to-play fundraising scandal by showing everyone exactly why it is a scandal. Last December, Hydro One profiteers gave the Liberal Party $165,000. Today, those same profiteers stand to make millions from the sale of Hydro One.

Nobody believes this is in the public interest. The Financial Accountability Officer has said this is not in the public interest.

Will the Premier finally put the interests of Ontarians ahead of her Bay Street friends, her donors, and stop the sale of Hydro One?

Interjections.

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

Minister?

Hon. Brad Duguid: The interests of Ontarians rest firmly in our ability to invest in the infrastructure across this province. That means building public transit. That means building roads and bridges—

Interjections.

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

Hon. Brad Duguid: That means investing in core infrastructure from one part of the province to the other.

The key here is we're willing to make the decisions we need to make, to make those investments. The folks on the other side of this Legislature do not have the courage to make those investments. They talk the talk, but they don't support us when we build this province up, when we build public transit, when we build roads and bridges, when we build core infrastructure like water/waste-water.

We're proud of the investments we're making: $160 billion over the next 12 years, the biggest investment in infrastructure in the history of Canada. You can't make those investments if you don't have the—

Interjections.

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

New question.

SENIORS' HEALTH SERVICES

Mrs. Cristina Martins: My question is—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Hold on. Try it again.

Mrs. Cristina Martins: My question is for the minister responsible for seniors' affairs. I know that in my riding of Davenport, I have a large group of seniors who are actively involved in the community, and it's important for me to know that they remain healthy and active.

As a matter of fact, when the minister recently spoke about his constituent Maria, it reminded me of my constituent Gloria, who too is a very engaged and active senior in my own riding of Davenport. Just like Maria, Gloria too wants to know what our government is doing to improve the lives of seniors.

Minister, as you know, Ontario's seniors have worked hard to make our province great, and we owe it to them to continue providing the services they rely on, especially at a time in their lives when they need it most.

Recently, during the 2016 budget deliberations, I heard from a number of seniors, including Gloria, with concerns about the costs of prescription drugs and copayments. I understand this government has been listening during the consultation process of the 2016 budget deliberations.

Mr. Speaker, can the minister inform the House of what is being done—

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

Minister responsible for seniors.

Hon. Mario Sergio: Let me thank the remarkable member from Davenport for a good question.

Speaker, when someone reaches the age of 65 years old, he or she is automatically eligible to receive prescription drugs covered through the Ontario Drug Benefit Program. Seniors would pay a yearly deductible or copayment of $100, and then some $6.11 for dispensing fees.

The 2016 budget, Speaker, addresses this very big issue in a very positive way. Low-income seniors no longer will be required to pay the $100 copayment or deductible, or the dispensing fee of $6.11 will drop to $2. What this means is that 170,000 low-income seniors will be saving $130 a year. This goes a long way in helping our seniors.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mrs. Cristina Martins: I want to thank the minister for his response. I know that Gloria and the seniors in my riding of Davenport will be pleased to hear of the changes that are being made, and I'm pleased to learn that lower-income seniors can apply for help with these costs through the Seniors Co-Payment Program. I know that in my riding of Davenport, this will be welcomed by many who fall into this category.

It is helpful to know that if the 2016 budget is passed, low-income seniors that fall under the Seniors Co-Payment Program will pay no yearly deductible, and the copayment drops up to $2 for each filled prescription. That is great news and I know many will be happy to learn of these changes.

It is important to know that our seniors are being taken care of. I applaud the minister for the great work he has done as the minister responsible for seniors' affairs and his efforts to make sure these changes were made.

Mr. Speaker, can the minister please inform the House about what he is hearing from seniors and what recent measures this government is doing to further assist seniors?

Hon. Mario Sergio: Speaker, I want to thank the member for the question again. Let me say that I speak regularly to seniors, and especially in the last week I have been enjoying speaking to a lot of seniors. But when I finish speaking to my seniors in the riding of York West, telling them of the positive measures that would improve their lives with the content of the budget, then they end up putting on a nice big smile.

I tell them that they will be saving $170 for the shingles vaccine. I keep telling them that they save $70 for the elimination of their hydro debt retirement charges. I tell them that they save $30 from the emissions test, and 135,000 seniors will be paying 50% less when they go to the hospital parking lot. This helps our seniors in a big way.

Also, there's an infusion of $75 million over three years in community-based residential hospice and palliative care. On this side of the House we always try to improve the quality of life for our seniors.

ONTARIO TRILLIUM FOUNDATION

Mr. Steve Clark: My question is for the Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport. Speaker, hard-working volunteer groups are in shock after the Ontario Trillium Foundation suddenly suspended its capital grant program. This funding is vital to Legions, community centres and other facilities as it literally keeps the roof over their heads. Now this government has funnelled every cent of Trillium's $25-million capital program into the Ontario 150 program. That's right: A minister who has millions of dollars for Pan Am executive bonuses and manicures for athletes now doesn't have a penny for the dedicated volunteer groups who rely on Trillium.

Speaker, is this government so broke that it can't fund a new program, one that represents 0.02% of its $136-billion budget, without stealing from vulnerable volunteer organizations?

Interjections.

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

Again, the tenor of the comment was really not conducive to a proper question when it comes to accusations. I'm disappointed, but I'm just going to let it go and warn the member that if anything else like that happens again in his supplementary, it will cost him his question.

Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport.

1130

Hon. Michael Coteau: I want to start by saying the Ontario Trillium Foundation is one of those organizations that's not only recognized in Ontario as one of those great organizations, but throughout this country and internationally. We're very proud of the work they do.

Mr. Speaker, this is a government that has invested $1.4 billion through Trillium since it has come into power. That's a significant amount of money that has been contributed and distributed right across our province. If you look throughout the Legislature, I know that Trillium has an influence in each of our ridings and makes such a huge difference in making sure that we continue to grow and build Ontario to the place we think it should be, and that is being one of the best places on the entire planet to live.

In regard to funding, if you look at the amount that was provided to Trillium last year and the amount that's going to be provided this year, it's actually an increase, so I don't know what the member is upset about. We're going to use Canada 150, and using money to invest in

infrastructure is what this government's all about. We're very proud of our record when it comes to Trillium.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Steve Clark: I really don't understand the minister's spin. If it was such great news, why was it announced at 4:53 p.m. on the Thursday before the Easter weekend?

I know why. It was to bury the fact that they dealt a devastating blow to community groups for whom OTF capital funding is a lifeline. It's more evidence of the price we're all paying for this government's waste and mismanagement. This happened so suddenly, Speaker, that applications were already submitted for the upcoming intake, but the government just dumped them and the thousands of volunteer hours to prepare them right into the shredder.

Speaker, to the minister: Does my Legion have to buy a $6,000 ticket to a Liberal fundraiser to get access? I'm going to ask the minister, will he admit that he's wrong, and will he reinstate the OTF capital grants program to help those groups whose future he's put at risk?

Interjections.

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

Minister.

Hon. Michael Coteau: The member opposite knows clearly that the Ontario Trillium Foundation is an arm's-length organization that has the ability to make its own decisions. It has got a board. In fact, we have regional Trillium boards that are set up throughout this province, the grant review teams, that take into account the local needs of the communities before making the decision.

Mr. Speaker, we're about providing opportunity on this side of the House. When we see Canada 150 coming up, we're proud to invest in that initiative and we're so proud of the fact that we'll be investing into infrastructure. You can tell your Legion to contact us directly when those grants come out, and they can apply for funding to increase infrastructure right across this province. We're very proud of our record.

MINIMUM WAGE

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: My question is to the Premier. It is the responsibility of government to lift people up, to make life better and to make sure that people no longer have to work multiple jobs simply to make ends meet. In Ontario, over 750,000 workers are taking home a minimum wage that is simply too low to help anyone get ahead. Right now, we're seeing a powerful movement south of the border that has workers standing up and saying, "It's time for a $15 minimum wage."

Premier, New Democrats say that it's time to raise the floor for every worker in this province. Will the Liberal government commit to raising the minimum wage to $15 an hour for all Ontarians?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Labour.

Interjections.

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

The Premier went to the Minister of Labour.

Hon. Kevin Daniel Flynn: Speaker, the NDP's sudden interest in the minimum wage certainly is welcome on this side of the House. It's been a long time coming.

We've been working hard to bring minimum wage increases that are consistent, are predictable and are fair to the people in this province. Between 1996 and 2003, the general minimum wage in Ontario was frozen, for nine long years, at $6.85. We knew we could do better than that, Speaker.

We've made significant changes since then to the process. We've raised the minimum wage nine times. Nobody in North America has a higher minimum wage, other than the District of Columbia. No state has the minimum wage that Ontario has. Ontario has the highest of any province in this country.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: Back to the Premier: At the rate that the Liberals are raising the minimum wage, it will be 2037 before we hit $15 an hour—and by the way, they just did it in California, so the minister's wrong about that.

Ontario's New Democrats want to make it clear that the Liberals won't stand up for Ontarians and that Ontarians will have a choice to make in two short years to elect one that absolutely will. Fundamental change is needed to address a fundamentally changing workplace.

Premier, what does the government have to say to the hundreds of thousands of Ontarians that are not getting the decent wages they deserve for the hard work that they do every day?

Hon. Kevin Daniel Flynn: Once again I want to thank the member and I want to thank the party for the interest in this issue. Certainly, it's long overdue, but it's a conversation that we wish we'd had them on board on a little while ago.

Let me reiterate: We've got the highest minimum wage of any province in Canada, higher than any state. With guidance, we've put together a Minimum Wage Advisory Panel. We've got guidance from business, from labour—

Hon. Jeff Leal: Anti-poverty.

Hon. Kevin Daniel Flynn: —anti-poverty groups. The NDP made not one single submission to that panel. When you had the opportunity to speak out, you were silent.

Certainly, I think, we can look to the province of Ontario as an example of how you can put in predictable wage increases for people on minimum wage.

In 2019, Speaker, part of the process calls for a review of the process. If we need to do more at that time, I hope this House will.

FIRST RESPONDERS

Mrs. Kathryn McGarry: My question is for the Minister of Labour. Minister, yesterday was a very special day for this Legislature. We were joined by first responders from across the province, including my community of Cambridge.

As a former nurse in the emergency department, I worked closely with first responders and gained first-hand knowledge of what they face while doing their job. These dedicated women and men put themselves in harm's way every day, and it can take a toll on their mental health. Yesterday and over the course of this year, they eagerly participated in the legislative process in order to see Bill 163 turn into law.

I was thrilled to see that the Supporting Ontario's First Responders Act received the support of every member of this Legislature. It was great to see all members on all sides of the House be able to stand forward for this very important bill.

Speaker, through you to the minister, how will this impact the lives of Ontario first responders?

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

Minister of Labour?

Hon. Kevin Daniel Flynn: I, too, would like to thank the member for that question.

I think, especially on a day like this, I'd like to show my appreciation to all the members of the Legislature who participated in the debate, who joined the conversation on post-traumatic stress disorder and who are starting to talk more and more about mental health in the workplace.

This bill is something we should all be proud of. It shows what we're capable of when we work together. I think the specifics of Bill 163 are well known throughout this House. Members have participated. It's going to presume that post-traumatic stress disorder diagnosed in first responders is work-related. It's going to allow me, as the Minister of Labour, to ensure that employers of those first responders submit their prevention plans directly to me, and I will make them public.

What I want to focus on is what this really means: We need to deal with people that have PTSD in a dignified way, but we need to prevent it in the first place.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

Mrs. Kathryn McGarry: I would like to thank the minister for his work and his dedication on Bill 163. It's important—

Mr. Paul Miller: Thank you, Cheri.

Mrs. Kathryn McGarry: It's important that we are taking steps to help first responders to get the help that they need.

I know another large part of this issue is prevention. As we know, first responders are twice as likely to suffer from PTSD than the general population, and it's often the accumulation of incidents that causes PTSD symptoms in the first place. We must ensure that supports are in place to help prevent PTSD. It's also important that employers have the resources they need to identify PTSD and support those who may suffer.

Over the weekend, I heard an ad on the radio that addressed this issue. Increasing awareness of PTSD helps families and friends of first responders to recognize possible symptoms.

Speaker, through you to the minister: What is the government doing to prevent PTSD and to support first responders?

Hon. Kevin Daniel Flynn: The member from Hamilton East–Stoney Creek yelled out, "Thanks, Cheri," and I think we do need to thank the member from Parkdale–High Park for the work that she has done on this issue.

Applause.

Hon. Kevin Daniel Flynn: Thank you. But I hope all members have also started to hear the awareness campaign that's taking place: the radio ads, we've got guidance out there for employers, it's online. You can go online. You can have the smallest fire department in this province and you'll have access to the same resources as the biggest police department in this province. What we're doing is making sure that we get as much information on post-traumatic stress disorder and how to prevent it out to employers in this province.

I committed to making Ontario a leader in this regard. As a result of the vote yesterday, I think all members of Ontario deserve credit for making us that leader.

VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry on a point of order.

Hon. Bill Mauro: Speaker, thank you very much. If I could just slightly out of order introduce Ms. Peggy Brekveld, the vice-president of the Ontario Federation of Agriculture, from my riding of Thunder Bay–Atikokan. Thank you.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Etobicoke Centre?

Mr. Yvan Baker: Thank you, Speaker. I beg your indulgence.

I just wanted to introduce the students from Kipling Collegiate Institute, under the leadership of teacher Tom Ferguson, who are here with us at Queen's Park. Welcome to Queen's Park.

CORRECTION OF RECORD

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member for Newmarket–Aurora.

Mr. Chris Ballard: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. A couple of weeks ago, I introduced Nick Saul by the title of his former company. Nick Saul is actually president and CEO of Community Food Centres Canada.

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

The House recessed from 1142 to 1500.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: My guests are not here, but I know that a lot of friends have been wondering when I would bring my daughter. She is here, so I will be around outside once we are done here.

How's that for an introduction of guests, Speaker?

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Far be it from me to interrupt an introduction of a baby.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

CANCER CARE

Mr. Jeff Yurek: I am rising today to highlight Daffodil Month and cancer awareness during April.

As many of you know, April is the month when we proudly wear our daffodil pins to show our strength and courage for those battling or who have battled cancer. The Canadian Cancer Society has done a tremendous job raising funds for life-saving research, information and support services to help end this terrible disease.

In 2015, Ontario saw 76,000 new cancer cases and 28,500 deaths. Prostate cancer, breast cancer, colorectal cancer and lung cancer are the most prominent in Ontario.

Throughout the month of April, the Canadian Cancer Society will be doing daffodil pinnings across the province in order to promote cancer awareness. This afternoon I was pleased to welcome members of the Canadian Cancer Society to the Ontario Legislature and have my daffodil pinning. For the rest of the month I will proudly wear my pin—provided the House allows me—and encourage all members of this House and members of our communities to do the same.

Cancer is a devastating disease that affects many Ontarians and their families. Cancer does not discriminate. It affects all people—of all races, ages and faiths.

Each year I enjoy attending either the St. Thomas or Aylmer Relay for Life to help raise funds for cancer research.

Until a cure can be found to end this terrible disease, we must ensure that we continue to support the fight against cancer.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I'm glad the member brought it up, so now I get to say that unless there is unanimous consent to wear any item on your person, you cannot wear that item until unanimous consent is given. My sensitivity to the announcement was stretched, and when you brought it to my attention, I have to ask the member not to wear the pin until unanimous consent is given. That's usually done through a discussion by House leaders.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I would not assume that you would ever do that.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Correct.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): This afternoon. That's wonderful.

Members' statements: The member from Windsor West.

AUTISM TREATMENT

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: Michelle Helou and her son Noah are exemplary citizens in my riding of Windsor West. Noah lives with autism spectrum disorder, and for 16 years he received behavioural support services at the Windsor Regional Children's Centre, respite services and out-of-home respite services. However, when Noah turned 18 last September, all the services he enjoyed as a child were suddenly cut off. Noah was then put on a wait-list for Passport funding, the program that is meant to help ease the transition for families as their children enter adulthood.

When he faced an endless wait-list for services, Michelle took matters into her own hands. Michelle and parents living throughout Windsor and Essex county organized a petition drive calling on the government to act to eliminate wait times for all families waiting for Passport funding—not in the same manner they eliminated the wait-list for IBI and ABA services.

I'm thrilled to announce that in the week following World Autism Awareness Day, I have received over 2,000 signatures on a petition calling on this government to support families by eliminating wait-lists for all adult children on the waiting list for Passport funding.

Michelle Helou and my constituents of Windsor West did their part. Now it's time for the government to act.

REFUGEES

Mr. Shafiq Qaadri: Following my welcoming and introduction and the very gracious reception of the Syrian refugees and the folks who accompanied them from yesterday morning, I would just like once again to salute the many members, not only of the Legislature of Ontario but of the government, who have voted and supported the resettlement and integration of these refugees.

Once again, Speaker, with your permission, I would like to salute the visitors who came to us, in particular, the Loqman Yousef Al Masri family and their four children, Adnan, Emad, Mohammed and Jury—little Jury is only four years old; the Bilal Abo Al Hawa family and his wife, Marwa, and their two little kids, Alian and Miral; and the Yasmine Musto family and their four children, Rawan, Areej, Malaz and Mahmoud, and the great people from COSTI immigrant settlement services, Bruno Suppa, Mario Calla, Tanaz Pardiwalla, Mirna El Sabbagh, Lynde Yasui, Mary Gharwal, Yasmine Dossal, Andrea Brambilla and, as well, the gentleman from the Syrian Canadian Foundation who has been instrumental in organizing volunteer efforts, Fares Sultan.

Speaker, as you know, Ontario has committed to bringing 14,000 Syrian refugees to Ontario. That's part of the 25,000-and-counting commitment by Prime Minister Trudeau. I am honoured, privileged, grateful and humbled to be part of a government that supports this.

HUMAN TRAFFICKING

Ms. Laurie Scott: Last week, I had the honour of attending Toronto city council, where Councillor Paul Ainslie brought forward a motion, seconded by Council-

lor Mike Layton, in support of my initiatives against human trafficking. Council unanimously passed the motion in support of my private member's Bill 158, the Saving the Girl Next Door Act, and the report of the Select Committee on Sexual Violence and Harassment.

The select committee found that Ontario is a major hub of human trafficking, but it doesn't have to be like this. Victims, over 90% of whom are Canadian-born and predominantly female, are lured, manipulated and coerced, often over the Internet, from every part of Ontario. It is in our neighbourhoods and in our communities. Human trafficking targets the girl next door.

We must take immediate action in implementing a multi-jurisdictional and coordinated task force of law enforcement agencies, crown prosecutors, judges, victims' services and front-line agencies. We must foster partnerships with community service providers and other stakeholders to share resources and best practices.

Bill 158 expands and enhances existing laws and serves as a measure of justice. The girl next door is crying out for our help. We cannot continue to stand idly by. We must be aware of and understand the necessary steps to take in tackling this crisis. Having the support of Canada's largest city is encouraging, and we continue to fight against this heinous crime.

JIM FREEMAN

Ms. Jennifer K. French: Today it is my sad honour to stand in this Legislature to pay tribute to a fallen comrade and lifelong activist, Jim Freeman, who passed away on April 4.

Jim Freeman had a long history of labour activism and fighting for a better, fairer and kinder world. At Local 222, he served as the alternate committee person, the chairperson of the political education committee and a member of the Local 222 flying squad.

He was involved in countless NDP and progressive campaigns. He was one of the founders of We Are Oshawa and was an organizer for the Kingston Days of Action. He singlehandedly banged in thousands of signs, carried hundreds of flags and banners, and championed every important issue to make our society more fair.

Jim was a working-class hero. He was the president of our Durham Region Labour Council and served at the OFL. His lifelong friend Sid Ryan said, "He was the best friend that a person could possibly have. Jimmy's love for his community was only outshone by the love for his friends." Everyone loved Jimmy, and Jimmy loved them right back.

I don't know how to fit Jimmy Freeman into a minute and a half or how to pay tribute using only parliamentary language. He was a legend and he was authentic and everyone learned from him; everyone laughed with him. He broadened the movement one personal connection at a time and he showed us a better way forward while making sure no one was left behind.

Some people blaze trails and some people widen them for the rest of us, and Jimmy Freeman did both. He inspired us to care, to work and to fight, and with his fiery passion, brilliant mind, fantastic stories and awesome humour—often wicked, inappropriate humour—how could we not be inspired?

The ripples of this loss are being felt across the country, but they can't travel half as far as the reach of his impact. He used to remind us of Tommy Douglas's words: "Courage, my friend, 'tis not too late to build a better world." He did build a better world, and he made each of us a little better in the process.

Brother Jimmy Freeman will be terribly missed.

1510

WATER FLUORIDATION

Mr. Bob Delaney: This afternoon, I'll be tabling petitions on community water fluoridation signed by tens of thousands of Ontarians from all across the province, and there will be many more thousands of such petitions to come.

Decades ago, researchers noticed that some regions of Ontario had much lower rates of dental decay than others. They found it was because naturally occurring fluoride in the water protected people from dental decay and that when added to community drinking water, fluoride did the same thing.

Wherever communities that once fluoridated drinking water stopped doing it, rates of dental decay have quickly soared. The egregious stupidity of removing fluoridation from community drinking water is based on junk science and outright superstition. The science and the experts are clear: Community water fluoridation is a proven, safe and effective means of minimizing dental decay.

In a 2012 study of oral health by then Ontario Chief Medical Officer of Health Arlene King, the study's number one recommendation was: "Conduct a review of current policies and mechanisms to ensure that all Ontarians have access to optimally fluoridated drinking water."

Ontarians everywhere agree. It's time for legislation to make community fluoridation mandatory Ontario-wide. It's the right thing to do.

ONTARIO SCOTTISH COMMUNITY

Mr. Bill Walker: Twenty-five years have passed since this Legislature declared April 6 as Tartan Day in Ontario. So I rise today to recognize the significant contributions of the Scottish community to our province's economic, agricultural and cultural well-being.

Along with the English, Irish, French and our First Nations, the Scottish were among the first to settle and build this great province into a place that all of us are so proud to call home today. They founded villages and they built churches, sawmills, blacksmith shops and, of course, breweries and distilleries just as they introduced us to bagpipes, haggis, Highland dancing and the official Ontario tartan.

My riding is proud to enjoy this heritage. Grey, along with the surrounding counties of Bruce, Wellington and

Dufferin, was settled by these industrious people, the likes of Agnes Macphail and Nellie McClung, both of whom had Scottish heritage and were born in the great riding of Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound.

Quite a few of them have served as members of provincial Parliament. One of them was Bill Murdoch. Murdoch was the MPP who introduced the Tartan Day resolution, which all three parties supported and passed back in 1991. He also introduced and helped pass the official Tartan Act in 2000.

Murdoch, as most of you know, was a colourful and distinctive MPP, very much in line with his Scottish culture and heritage. He was proud of anything Scottish, especially wearing a kilt in Ontario's official tartan, which he donned to express his pride and independence.

As most of you are aware, the 6th day of April is of historical importance to our Scottish community as it marks the anniversary of the declaration of Scottish independence, declared in 1320.

I thank all of those wearing plaid today for paying their respects to Tartan Day and invite all members, many of whom come from different heritages and background, to recognize the significant contributions of our Scottish community in Ontario.

HOSPICE OF WINDSOR AND ESSEX COUNTY

Ms. Eleanor McMahon: I rise in the House today to extend my congratulations to the Hospice of Windsor and Essex County on the grand opening of their Erie Shores satellite hospice location, the first of its kind in Canada.

Mr. Speaker, as you know, I am the proud member for Burlington. However, I was born in Windsor and lived there for most of my young life. As someone who calls these two cities home, I'm proud to recognize the state-of-the-art palliative and end-of-life care that Hospice of Windsor offers. In fact, Karen Candy, the executive director of Carpenter Hospice in Burlington, travelled to the Windsor hospice recently to compare and discuss best practices.

As we all know, making end-of-life care decisions is a challenging and sensitive topic for patients, families and health care providers alike. That is why we are extremely fortunate to have hospices like the one in my community and the Hospice of Windsor, too.

For over 37 years, the staff and volunteers at the Hospice of Windsor and Essex County have been providing compassionate care to patients and families dealing with life-altering diagnoses. I know this well as my mother, Marie McMahon, has been a volunteer there for over 30 years. Even at age 90, every Thursday she cooks lunch for patients who are dying and for their families. I know she receives just as much as she gives from doing something so close to her heart.

Today, the Hospice of Windsor is taking the next step in serving their community with the grand opening of their new Erie Shores location in Leamington. Now, patients will be able to access the valuable services they provide closer to home in a comfortable and warm environment.

I'd like to commend the staff and volunteers, including my mother, Marie, of the Hospice of Windsor for their amazing and compassionate work and wish them great success with their new Erie Shores location.

FOCUS FOR ETHNIC WOMEN

Ms. Daiene Vernile: Last week, I attended the Working Centre's annual Mayors' Dinner in my community of Kitchener-Waterloo. This year, the guests of honour were Ari Ariaratnam and Jassy Narayan, and I wish to honour them here today.

Ari was born in a small town near Jaffna in Sri Lanka. Growing up, Ari says that she was greatly influenced by her very generous parents. Two decades ago, she came to Canada and received a warm welcome in the community of Kitchener-Waterloo. She eventually became the executive director of the K-W Multicultural Centre.

Jassy grew up in rural Guyana and only had the opportunity to attend school until grade 8. This certainly did not deter her long service to our community. After moving to Canada and getting involved with the YWCA, Jassy assisted with the settlement of refugees from Vietnam, Laos and Latin America.

While serving together on the board of the K-W YWCA, Ari and Jassy developed a training program for newcomer women. This is how their organization, Focus for Ethnic Women, was born with the aid of other like-minded women in the community. Their mission is to encourage the participation of immigrant and refugee women in our community.

In the years since, Focus for Ethnic Women has created programs including occupational training, English-language instruction, life skills training and many more.

I'm very proud of these women and of the commitment they have made to my community of Kitchener-Waterloo.

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

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

790186 ONTARIO INC. ACT, 2016

M^me^ Gélinas moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill Pr42, An Act to revive 790186 Ontario Inc.

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): Pursuant to standing order 86, this bill stands referred to the Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

FOOD AND BEVERAGE INDUSTRY

Hon. Jeff Leal: I rise in the House today to recognize the important role Ontario's food processing industry

plays in the success of our agri-food industry, and a wonderful new program that will help this sector have an even brighter future.

Ontario's agri-food and beverage sector provides one in every nine jobs in our province and generates over $35 billion in GDP. To put this in context, the auto sector in the province of Ontario generates about $35.5 billion in GDP every year. And, of course, this sector feeds people here at home and indeed around the world.

Within the sector, food and beverage manufacturing is one of the largest employers in Ontario, with some 3,000 establishments employing approximately 95,000 people across this province. Mr. Speaker, everybody should know that Toronto is the second-largest food distribution hub in North America.

These businesses employ butchers, electricians, marketers, accountants, engineers, scientists and more. The job opportunities in this sector are as diverse as the food and beverage products this industry makes, and I think we can all agree that it's always good when we can promote job and career opportunities in the great province of Ontario.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to tell you about the good work that Food and Beverage Ontario, a not-for-profit, industry-led organization, is doing to promote the great opportunities that exist within this sector. With the support of our government and the government of Canada provided through Growing Forward 2, FBO has created a province-wide awareness campaign called Taste Your Future. This campaign aims to draw attention to the abundance of jobs and careers available in the food and beverage processing sector. It will promote 164 programs at 29 Ontario colleges and universities that offer diploma and degree programs, and it will help people learn about the industry, find their place in it and seek their destiny in it.

1520

Long-term, secure employment is tremendously important to Ontario's social and economic health. Opportunities for good, permanent jobs are available in the agri-food sector, and we need to encourage the next generation of agricultural and food processing leaders to seize these opportunities. A healthy agriculture and food sector is crucial to the success of our province, and we want to encourage more Ontarians to pursue careers within the agri-food and beverage processing sector.

That is why this government, your government, is committed to working with partners to support agricultural learning so that it can continue to be a leader in job creation. This is why, to ensure sustainability and success for the agri-food sector in the future, our government created the Food and Beverage Growth Fund, which is part of the province's 10-year, $2.7-billion Jobs and Prosperity Fund.

Our most recent announcement was a $5-million investment to help P and H Milling company build its first greenfield flour mill in Ontario in 75 years, to be located in Hamilton Harbour.

Just this past year, I also had the pleasure of announcing a $1-million investment to help Mississauga's Super-Pufft purchase and install a new canister crisp line, allowing them to double their production capacity and leverage new market opportunities in over 34 markets.

Overall, our government has invested nearly $7.5 million, leveraging a total investment of $62.3 million in projects through the food and beverages fund to boost the productivity and competitiveness of Ontario's food and beverage manufacturing sector. These strategic investments have, in turn, created or maintained over 700 jobs in our province and helped create further growth in the food processing sector. These jobs, and many others that are being created each and every day, need to be filled by innovative and eager young Ontarians. Ontario is an ideal place for the industry to grow and thrive thanks to a growing population, leading colleges and universities, and access to local and export markets.

I applaud the efforts of Food and Beverage Ontario and their new Taste Your Future awareness campaign, and I encourage everybody in this House to keep eating granola bars that are manufactured right in Peterborough. I encourage all my colleagues in the House to visit tasteyourfuture.ca to learn more about the campaign and help spread the word to the people of their communities about the great opportunities that exist in Ontario's world-class agri-food and beverage processing sector.

NATIONAL VOLUNTEER WEEK

Hon. Michael Chan: It gives me great pleasure to rise in the House today to recognize National Volunteer Week. This year, National Volunteer Week is celebrated across the country from April 10 to 16, and it represents an excellent opportunity to thank and celebrate Ontario's volunteers. They have an enormous impact on all of our lives.

Almost five million volunteers of all ages generously donate their time and talents to a variety of programs, services and causes. Their efforts strengthen our communities and make a real difference to countless people each and every day. Volunteers can be found in every corner of the province and in every sector. They support caregivers, welcome newcomers and refugees, coach teams, support food banks, protect our environment, and knock on doors for worthy causes. For some, volunteering is a one-time event; for others, it is a lifelong commitment. All volunteers deserve our respect, recognition, support and heartfelt thanks.

The Ontario government proudly recognizes volunteers through a number of programs, including the Ontario Medal for Young Volunteers, the Lieutenant Governor's Community Volunteer Award for Students and the wonderful June Callwood outstanding achievement award.

As many of you know, the annual volunteer service awards are up and running in communities across the province until the end of June. This year, more than 11,000 volunteers are being recognized for their outstanding community service. I cannot stress enough how vital volunteers are to Ontario communities.

In a few days, I will have the privilege of launching the ninth annual ChangeTheWorld Ontario Youth Volunteer Challenge. Since 2008, more than 181,000 students have participated in ChangeTheWorld, donating hundreds of thousands of hours. Youth gain confidence through volunteering. They develop their talents and skills, expand their personal networks and build valued connections in their communities. This year's ChangeTheWorld campaign runs from April 10 to May 23, with the goal of engaging more than 39,000 young people.

It's important to make sure that volunteering remains a proud tradition in our province for people of all ages. My ministry is committed to strengthening and supporting volunteerism in Ontario through implementing our first-ever volunteer action plan. We are working with the public, not-for-profit and private sectors to promote the value of volunteerism, and we continue to support the legacy of volunteerism from the 2015 Pan Am Games. More than 23,000 volunteers helped make the games a success. As part of this legacy, we developed two initiatives to support volunteerism that continue to this day. Number one: the SPARK Ontario website, which connects thousands of Ontarians with volunteer opportunities in their community. Number two: the PREB–Ontario certificate program, which is used by not-for-profit organizations across the province to recognize volunteers and the skills they have developed through their experiences.

We in government all play an important role in supporting volunteerism. As Minister of Citizenship, Immigration and International Trade, it's an honour and a privilege for me to recognize our exceptional volunteers across the province and to simply say thank you. I invite all the members of the Legislature to recognize the volunteers in their community next week. I also encourage everyone to attend the volunteer service award ceremonies taking place in communities across the province over the coming weeks.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): It's time for responses.

FOOD AND BEVERAGE INDUSTRY

Mr. Toby Barrett: Food and beverage is one of the few good news—it's a sector that grew by 11% from 2007 to 2012. Ontario, yes, is one of the largest food and beverage manufacturing hubs in North America, perhaps only after Chicago. Los Angeles might have something to say about that as well.

The need for Taste Your Future, the skills program—however, the sector is facing the highest electricity rates in North America, the highest debt load from this government of any subnational jurisdiction, the second-highest combined provincial and federal income taxes, and, of course, rolls and rolls of red tape. A recent survey by Angus Reid: 57% of Canadians say that rising food prices have made it more difficult for them to feed their households. This is tough on low-income earners and young people. It's led to 71% of respondents switching to cheaper brands. They're cutting back on meat; they're cutting back on fruits and vegetables.

The $28-million cut to the budget for OMAFRA did not help. There was a reaction from the farm community. There's a Twitter site, @OntarioFarms. The question: "Are you satisfied with agriculture's inclusion in the 2016 budget?" The answer: A resounding 88% said no.

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We see a $28-million budget cut. We know that the Rural Economic Development Program seems to be on the chopping block. OMAFRA lost out on Green Investment Fund initiatives. There's a payroll tax of nearly 4% courtesy of the Ontario pension. The industry will be hit with cap-and-trade fuel taxes, with no compensation in return.

Businesses face ever-increasing input costs—I mentioned the red tape—and, rather than helping, the consensus seems to be that Ontario's latest budget and latest approach continue to hinder.

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

NATIONAL VOLUNTEER WEEK

Ms. Sylvia Jones: I'm pleased to rise on behalf of our leader, Patrick Brown, and the Ontario PC caucus to recognize National Volunteer Week.

Volunteers are indeed the heart and soul of many organizations across Ontario and throughout Canada. As MPPs, we attend many events happening throughout our ridings and across the province that are run and organized by volunteers. We meet those individuals and organizations who promote volunteerism, and inevitably I am impressed with the commitment and creativity of the thousands of volunteers who make these events possible.

In 2007, nearly half of all Canadians volunteered. Of these volunteers, 40% were involved in two or more organizations. People volunteer their time to an organization because they want to support their community. They want to give back. In 2010, almost all volunteers said that making a contribution to the community was a key motivating factor in their decision.

For those of you who don't volunteer, I'm going to try to scare you now. One beneficial reason to go and volunteer is that it improves our health. An American Journal of Public Health study found that individuals who volunteer are better protected against stress. In fact, individuals who don't give back as much have as much as a 30% higher risk of dying after a stressful event as compared to people who volunteer.

Not only do individuals benefit from volunteering, but activities undertaken by volunteers reduce costs to organizations, which allows them to increase programs within our communities.

There is, however, a barrier to volunteering, and that is the financial cost to get the police record check that is so critical for protection. It is an important cost factor, considering many individuals volunteer for two or more organizations.

That's why I brought forward my private member's bill, which is called the Helping Volunteers Give Back

Act. Bill 79 would allow volunteers to pay for their criminal record check once per year, yet access this record and distribute it to multiple volunteer organizations at no additional cost to the volunteer or the organization. This cost savings initiative would actually encourage more volunteers to donate their time to more worthy causes.

Volunteers are the real heroes in our communities, and I urge the government to show support for the thousands of individuals who want to volunteer by making it easier to do so.

NATIONAL VOLUNTEER WEEK

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: It is my privilege and my honour as the MPP for London–Fanshawe to talk about National Volunteer Week. It's so important in our community, no matter where you live, to recognize the invaluable contributions of all the volunteers in Ontario.

National Volunteer Week gives us the opportunity to shine a light on the tireless efforts of those extraordinary people dedicated to making our communities more vibrant, healthy and caring places to live. Most importantly, they do it without asking for praise or a paycheque. They do it because they see the need in their communities and have felt compelled to answer those calls for help personally.

In my hometown of London, I had the distinct pleasure of nominating three incredible women for the Leading Women, Building Communities Award. Today I want to share the work that these generous women have undertaken in my community.

Mandi Fields spearheaded the Tampon Tuesday initiative that has gained momentum to expand to several other communities in Ontario. This important initiative brings women together to network and donate feminine hygiene products to the London Food Bank. The goal is to ensure that women who are facing poverty or homelessness can live with dignity.

Jacqueline Fraser heads Northeast Community Conversations, an organization that promotes open dialogue on a variety of issues including mental health, social marginalization, seniors' issues, neighbourhood safety and bullying. Jacqueline is a tireless advocate for the underrepresented and marginalized, and the NECC was recently asked by the city of London to play a large role in community engagement for the Mayor's Advisory Panel on Poverty.

Twee Brown is a co-founder of 100 Women Who Care, an entrepreneur and a community volunteer. She sits on the boards of the Boys and Girls Club and the Grand Theatre, and supports the Bring It girls' confidence conference for young women.

Without volunteers, I can't imagine what our institutions and our communities would look like. Luckily, my community is full of amazing men and women and youth who are dedicated to improving the lives of others.

I am thankful to acknowledge our volunteers, not just today but every day, for the work they do and the fact that they, and they alone, make our community the place that it is and that we are all very proud of.

FOOD AND BEVERAGE INDUSTRY

Mr. John Vanthof: It's always an honour to rise on behalf of my NDP colleagues and today, once again, speak about the agri-food sector.

As a farmer, I often say that farmers are the cornerstone of the industry. But if you don't have the processing sector and the distribution sector, all you have is a stone and no industry, and farmers realize that. It's very important that we recognize how much the processing sector and the distribution sector create jobs in this economy. It's incredibly important for the overall province but to farmers as well.

It's important to recognize the food and beverage association of Ontario for their work and their newest venture, Taste Your Future, because we all know that an industry is nothing without its people. To train and to show young people the future careers that they could have in this sector is a very good initiative. I would like to congratulate them.

It's odd, though, that we stand in this House—and the provincial government and the federal government helped contribute—and we congratulate, but we also have to mention the things that the ministry doesn't talk about in this House: the cuts to agriculture; the cuts that could make a difference in creating more jobs in this province.

You know what $25 million less in the agriculture sector is? That's about the same as the cornerstone of the industry was asking for the risk management program. They didn't get that; instead, they got a $25-million cut. Those are the things that we should also be talking about if this government is really serious about helping to promote one of the strongest sectors in this province. In the immortal words of Don McCabe, it's number one because you can't eat cars. It's always number one.

If we're really serious, there shouldn't be cuts in the agriculture budget. We can always argue where we should have less and where we should have more, but if you're really serious about the number one industry in this province, the only industry that grew during the recession and continues to grow and has always grown, because it has always been there, just chugging away—and the government thinks, "We'll chip away at it and they won't notice." They are noticing. If you want to help agriculture, don't continue your cuts.

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

PETITIONS

SPECIAL-NEEDS STUDENTS

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

"Whereas demonstration schools in Ontario provide incredible necessary support for children with special education needs; and

"Whereas the current review by the government of Ontario of demonstration schools and other special education programs has placed a freeze on student intake and the hiring of teaching staff;

"Whereas children in need of specialized education and their parents require access to demonstration schools and other essential support services;

"Whereas the freezing of student intake is unacceptable as it leaves the most vulnerable students behind;

"Whereas this situation could result in the closure of many specialized education programs, depriving children with special needs of their best opportunity to learn;

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

"To immediately reinstate funding streams for demonstration schools and other specialized education services for the duration of the review and to commit to ensuring every student in need is allowed the chance to receive an education and achieve their potential."

I agree with this and will be passing it off to page Sohan.

SERVICES FOR THE DEVELOPMENTALLY DISABLED

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: This is a petition entitled "Support Families by Eliminating Waiting Lists for the Passport Program Now."

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas when children living with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) and other developmental disabilities turn 18, support from the Ontario government drastically changes;

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

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

"Whereas all Ontarians living with ASD and other developmental disabilities are entitled to a seamless transition of services;

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

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

I fully support this petition, will sign my name and send it to the table with page Amelia.

WATER FLUORIDATION

Mr. Bob Delaney: I have a petition addressed to the Ontario Legislative Assembly, signed by many thousands of Ontarians. It's entitled, "Update Ontario Fluoridation Legislation," and it reads as follows:

"Whereas scientific studies conducted during the past 70 years have consistently shown that community water fluoridation is a safe and effective means of preventing dental decay and is a public health measure endorsed by more than 90 national and international health organizations, including the Ontario Chief Medical Officer of Health and the Ontario Dental Association; and

"Whereas recent experience in Canadian cities that have removed fluoride from drinking water has led ... to a dramatic increase in tooth decay; and

"Whereas the Ontario Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care urges support for amending the Fluoridation Act to ensure community water fluoridation is mandatory; and

"Whereas the Ontario Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing urges support for the removal of 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 amend all applicable legislation and regulations to make the fluoridation of municipal drinking water mandatory in all municipal water systems across the province of Ontario before the end of the first session of the current Ontario Parliament."

I am pleased to sign and support this petition and send it down with page Maya.

HEALTH CARE FUNDING

Mr. Lorne Coe: I have a petition from the Ontario Medical Association to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas Ontario's growing and aging population is putting an increasing strain on our publicly funded health care system; and

"Whereas since February 2015, the Ontario government has made an almost 7% unilateral cut to physician services expenditures which cover all the care doctors provide to patients; and

"Whereas the decisions Ontario makes today will impact patients' access to quality care in the years to come and these cuts will threaten access to the quality, patient-focused care Ontarians need and expect;

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

"The Minister of Health and Long-Term Care return to the table with Ontario's doctors and work together through mediation-arbitration to reach a fair deal that protects the quality, patient-focused care Ontario's families deserve."

It is dated today, Speaker. I agree with the contents of the petition, I'll initial it and provide it to page Lauren.

AUTISM TREATMENT

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I have a petition that I am reading on behalf of my colleague Monique Taylor, MPP for

Hamilton Mountain. It is from Kristen Ellison. It is entitled, "Don't Balance the Budget on the Backs of Children with ASD," and it reads as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the government recently announced plans to reform the way autism services are delivered in the province, which leaves children over the age of five with no access to intensive behavioural intervention (IBI); and

"Whereas in 2003, former Liberal Premier Dalton McGuinty removed the previous age cap on IBI therapy, stating that Liberals support extending autism treatment beyond the age of six; and

"Whereas applied behaviour analysis (ABA) and intensive behavioural intervention (IBI) are the only recognized evidence-based practices known to treat autism spectrum disorder (ASD); and

"Whereas the combined number of children waiting for ABA and IBI therapies in Ontario is approximately 16,158; and

"Whereas wait-lists for services have become overwhelmingly long due to the chronic underfunding by this Liberal government; and

"Whereas some families are being forced to remortgage houses or move to other provinces while other families have no option but to go without essential therapy; and

"Whereas the Premier and her government should not be balancing the budget on the backs of kids with ASD and their families;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to direct the government of Ontario to immediately ensure that all children currently on the waiting list for IBI therapy are grandfathered into the new program so they do not become a lost generation."

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

GO TRANSIT

Mrs. Kathryn McGarry: I have a petition that's addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas Cambridge, Ontario, is a municipality of over 125,000 people, many of whom commute into the greater Toronto area daily;

"Whereas the current commuting options available for travel between the Waterloo region and the GTA are inefficient and time-consuming, as well as environmentally damaging;

"Whereas the residents of Cambridge and the Waterloo region believe that they would be well-served by commuter rail transit that connects the region to the Milton line, and that this infrastructure would have positive, tangible economic benefits to the province of Ontario;

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

"Direct crown agency Metrolinx to commission a feasibility study into building a rail line that connects the city of Cambridge to the GO train station in Milton, and to complete this study in a timely manner and communicate the results to the municipal government of Cambridge."

I agree with the petition, affix my name and give it to page Jerry to bring to the table.

ONTARIO DRUG BENEFIT PROGRAM

Ms. Sylvia Jones: This is a petition that was collected over the weekend at the Lions Home and Garden Show.

"Whereas the government of Ontario is rewriting the Ontario drug benefit, a change that will force seniors to pay significantly more for prescription drugs starting on August 1, 2016;

"Whereas the proposed increase will force most seniors to pay nearly twice as much for their medication, raising the annual deductible from $100 to $170, increasing the co-payment or a fee paid per prescription;

"Whereas prescription drugs make up the largest portion, almost 30%, of out-of-pocket spending for seniors and that the average senior household spends about $500 a year on regular prescription drugs and requires at least eight types of different drugs each year to stay healthy and maintain their independence; and

"Whereas seniors on fixed income cannot afford to pay more for prescription drugs and should not be forced to skip medications that they can no longer afford to put their health at risk; and

"Whereas there is potential for seniors who skip medications to end up in emergency departments or be hospitalized, the most costly form of health care utilization, thereby significantly increasing the cost of our health care system overall;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to stop the government's plan to hike the costs of seniors' drugs and to work to expand access and make prescription drug coverage more affordable for all Ontarians."

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

HEALTH CARE FUNDING

M^me^ France Gélinas: I have this petition that has been sent to me by Dr. Pierre Bonin, who is a physician in Sudbury. It reads as follows:

"Whereas Ontario's growing and aging population is putting an increasing strain on our publicly funded health care system; and

"Whereas since February 2015, the Ontario government has made an almost 7% unilateral cut to physician services expenditures which cover all the care doctors provide to patients; and

"Whereas the decisions Ontario makes today will impact patients' access to quality care in the years to come and these cuts will threaten access to the quality, patient-focused care Ontarians need and expect;"

They "petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"The Minister of Health and Long-Term Care return to the table with Ontario's doctors and work together through mediation-arbitration to reach a fair deal that protects the quality, patient-focused care Ontario's families deserve."

I support this petition, will affix my name to it and ask my good page Lauren to bring it to the Clerks.

WATER FLUORIDATION

Mrs. Kathryn McGarry: I have a petition addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas fluoride is a mineral that exists naturally in virtually all water supplies, even the ocean; and

"Whereas scientific studies conducted during the past 70 years have consistently shown that the fluoridation of community water supplies is a safe and effective means of preventing dental decay, and is a public health measure endorsed by more than 90 national and international health organizations; and

"Whereas dental decay is the second most frequent condition suffered by children, and is one of the leading causes of absences from school; and

"Whereas Health Canada has determined that the optimal concentration of fluoride in municipal drinking water for dental health is 0.7 mg/L, a concentration providing optimal dental health benefits, and well below the maximum acceptable concentration to protect against adverse health effects; and

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"Whereas the decision to add fluoride to municipal drinking water is a patchwork of individual choices across Ontario, with municipal councils often vulnerable to the influence of misinformation, and studies of questionable or no scientific merit;

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

"That the ministries of the government of Ontario amend all applicable legislation and regulations to make the fluoridation of municipal drinking water mandatory in all municipal water systems across the province of Ontario."

I agree with the petition, affix my name and give it to page Jack to bring to the table.

DOG OWNERSHIP

Mr. Rick Nicholls: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas aggressive dogs are found among all breeds and mixed breeds; and

"Whereas breed-specific legislation has been shown to be an expensive and ineffective approach to dog bite prevention; and

"Whereas problem dog owners are best dealt with through education, training and legislation encouraging responsible behaviour;

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

"To repeal the breed-specific sections of the Dog Owners' Liability Act (2005)"—DOLA—"and any related acts, and to instead implement legislation that encourages responsible ownership of all dog breeds and types."

I agree with this petition. I give it to page Sohan.

MENTAL HEALTH AND ADDICTION SERVICES

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: "Better Mental Health Services.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas mental illness affects people of all ages, educational and income levels, and cultures; and

"Whereas one in five Canadians will experience a mental illness in their lifetime and only one third of those who need mental health services in Canada actually receive them; and

"Whereas mental illness is the second leading cause of human disability and premature death in Canada; and

"Whereas the cost of mental health and addictions to the Ontario economy is $34 billion; and

"Whereas the Select Committee on Mental Health and Addictions made 22 recommendations in their final report; and

"Whereas the Improving Mental Health and Addictions Services in Ontario Act, 2015, seeks to implement all 22 of these recommendations;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to pass the Improving Mental Health and Addictions Services in Ontario Act, 2015, which:

"(1) Brings all mental health services in the province under one ministry, the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care;

"(2) Establishes a single body to design, manage and coordinate all mental health and addictions systems throughout the province;

"(3) Ensures that programs and services are delivered consistently and comprehensively across Ontario;

"(4) Grants the Ombudsman full powers to audit or investigate providers of mental health and addictions services in Ontario."

I fully support this petition, sign it and give to page Terry.

HOME INSPECTION INDUSTRY

Mrs. Kathryn McGarry: I have another petition here that's addressed to Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas the home inspector industry remains largely unregulated; and

"Whereas homeowners are increasingly reliant on home inspectors to make an educated home purchase; and

"Whereas the unregulated industry poses a risk to consumers;

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

"To protect consumers by regulating the home inspection industry and licensing home inspectors."

I agree with the petition, sign it and give it to page Diluk to bring down to the table.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The time for petitions is over.

OPPOSITION DAY

GOVERNMENT POLICIES

Mr. Patrick Brown: I move that:

Whereas Ontario has had nine consecutive deficit budgets; and

Whereas Ontario pays nearly $1 billion a month in interest payments; and

Whereas Ontario now carries over $300 billion of debt due to years of scandal, waste and mismanagement, in particular with the gas plants, eHealth, Ornge and smart meters; and

Whereas the Auditor General has warned that Ontario's debt levels are a heavy load; and

Whereas the Auditor General has identified that the debt burden will lead to the crowding out of front-line services; and

Whereas the crowding out is being realized as this government has fired over 1,000 nurses and threatens to close special education demonstration schools; and

Whereas hospital beds are being closed, the cost of medication for seniors is being raised and funding for doctors is being slashed because of this government's debt and deficit;

The Legislative Assembly of Ontario calls on the Liberal government to present a truly credible plan to balance the budget, take immediate action to pay down the debt and to preserve quality education and health services.

Addressed to the Premier.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Mr. Brown has moved opposition day number 2. Mr. Brown?

Mr. Patrick Brown: I am happy to rise in support of this motion. The motion addresses the overwhelming debt and deficit the province faces after 13 years of Liberal government. Specifically, the motion calls upon the Liberal government to present a credible plan to balance the budget, as well as to take immediate action to pay down the debt.

Mr. Speaker, I am going to repeat some facts that become no less shocking each time you hear them. Ontario has become the most indebted subnational borrower in the world. Under the Liberals' watch, we continue to see our credit downgraded again and again, most recently by Standard and Poor's.

Budget 2016 was the ninth budget in a row that the Liberals have tabled with a multi-billion-dollar deficit. For the first time in Ontario's history, our debt has passed $300 billion. I want to let that sink in. That means that every man, woman and child living in Ontario has a share of the debt that is $22,103.

We continue to have serious concerns about the credibility of the government's numbers. Budget 2016 confirmed that the government is using one-time money from the sale of Hydro One to make the deficit appear smaller. It's also concerning that the Wynne Liberals are dipping into our province's rainy day fund to serve their political interests by artificially lowering the deficit.

But make no mistake. In a couple of years, after these one-time sales are exhausted and the spending continues, this will leave a massive hole in the government's budget. Should our province experience another economic downturn like the one in 2007-08, Ontario will no longer have those rainy day funds. It will be ill-equipped to support families with the services they deserve in their time of need.

It's not just us suggesting that the numbers are questionable; the government's revenue projections for 2017-18 are $4 billion higher than in the Financial Accountability Officer's best-case scenario that he laid out last fall. Why create an office for independent oversight of the government's financial figures if they completely ignore the independent oversight?

In addition, last year, the Auditor General outlined how debt servicing costs are taking money away from the funding of government programs and cuts to essential government services such as education and health care. The Auditor General calls it "crowding out." The Auditor General also highlighted what we have known for some time: The government has no long-term debt reduction plan.

This is not sustainable. We are already seeing the impact of services being crowded out. Hospital beds are being cut; autistic children older than five are being removed from wait-lists, leaving families with nowhere else to turn; and funding for physicians has been slashed across the board.

To add insult to injury, this is all the result of the Liberal government's scandal, mismanagement and waste. Let me just name a few examples:

—$1.1 billion wasted on the gas plant scandal;

—$2 billion squandered on smart meters;

—$9 billion overspent on renewable energy contracts;

—over $1 billion spent on bungled electronic health records; and

—the ongoing health care dollars that go towards Liberal bloated administration and bureaucracy, rather than front-line care—rather than patients.

Taxpayers should not be paying for this government's mistakes and this government's mismanagement. This year alone, as a result of the Liberals' governance, the government will be paying approximately $12 billion in interest on the debt. That amounts to $1 billion a month. We cannot continue to waste $1 billion each and every month, paying interest on the debt to foreign creditors. Put simply, that $1 billion means less money available for services that Ontarians depend on.

Let's put this into context. What is the result? What does $1 billion mean? What is the result of this government's mismanagement? What does it mean for the people of Ontario? Well, $1 billion could pay for one year of long-term care for 17,096 seniors; $1 billion

could have paid for the food of 14,000 families of four for one year; $1 billion could build 8,000 new affordable housing units. You could even purchase the Toronto Maple Leafs for $1 billion.

1600

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: But you wouldn't want to.

Interjections.

Mr. Patrick Brown: As a few of the Ottawa members have reminded me, you may not want to make that investment.

As Progressive Conservatives, we believe that in order to be socially compassionate, you must first be fiscally responsible. Because of the fiscal irresponsibility of this government, it has meant the cutting and the diminishment of the social infrastructure of the province. Just ask any nurse, just ask any educator, just ask any physician in the province of Ontario, and they will tell you about the cuts we've seen because of this government's mismanagement. By continuing with this fiscal mismanagement, this government is turning its back on the province's most vulnerable.

When the Ontario PC caucus says we're listening to the people of Ontario, we're not exaggerating. For this opposition day, we asked the public what matters most to them and what they wanted to see us raise in the Legislature. The public chose Ontario's debt and deficit as the issue they want to see the government address. The people of Ontario want to see the government demonstrate much-needed fiscal restraint and put forward a credible plan to balance the budget.

The problem is that no one trusts this government. The Fraser Institute confirmed with its most recent report that Kathleen Wynne has the worst fiscal record of any sitting Premier in Canada. The Liberals don't have a solution to balance our budget that doesn't involve tax hikes, service cuts and more asset sales. Voting in support of this motion would be a first step for the Liberals to demonstrate that this government is willing to change, that it isn't the same old same old broken Liberal Party.

Mr. Speaker, I urge the Liberal members to show their constituents they are listening and they support this motion. Let's ensure a sustainable and vibrant future for our children and grandchildren. Let's preserve Ontario's quality education and health services. The future of our province depends on it.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

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

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: I want to thank the member from Simcoe North for bringing this motion before us today. It does provide members with an opportunity to highlight, for those who care to listen, exactly what it is that Ontarians have been telling us they need from this government.

The official opposition and the third party share a common belief when it comes to the Liberal government. We agree they have done a horrible job of investing in and making life easier for everyday Ontarians. We agree that Ontario is $300 billion in debt due to years of scandal, mismanagement and waste linked to gas plants, eHealth, Ornge and smart meters.

Where we do strongly disagree is on how to solve the problems facing our province. For example, the official opposition have echoed the NDP's long-standing claims that the health care system is in crisis mode, yet they have not echoed our calls for investment in our cash-strapped health care system, a system that is buckling under four years of frozen budgets and core funding, excluded inflationary costs and skyrocketing demands in growth.

We can appreciate that the opposition is working very hard at changing the tone of their policies. However, most of us just can't forget that they too have a legacy of slashing health care budgets. During the 1995 election, Harris also promised to increase health care spending, but once he became Premier, he sang a different tune. As Premier, Mike Harris shut down 28 hospitals throughout the province, and thousands of health care workers lost their jobs. Unfortunately, this is not a new concept in Ontario politics: Campaign on promises of investment, but deliver cuts instead.

Nor are we likely to forget that Tim Hudak's plan, supported by his caucus, was to cut 100,000 public sector jobs, with most of those jobs coming from the education and health care sectors. Hudak claimed it would save money to fire 2,000 health care planning staff and replace them with volunteers, and offload the cost and responsibilities onto our hospitals.

These ideas just don't make sense. The false idea that cutting jobs and services in the public sector somehow creates investments and jobs in the private sector has been disproven time and time again.

Over the past 13 years, the Liberals have deliberately chosen to invest our hard-earned tax dollars in bureaucracy and administration when they haven't been tying it up in scandal after scandal.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): They were so quiet when Mr. Brown was speaking. Now I can't even hear the member from London–Fanshawe.

Continue.

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: The hard truth is that for most Ontarians, life is getting harder. Families are struggling. Good jobs are hard to find and even harder to keep. Inequality is growing, and the gap between those doing very well and those who are falling behind is only getting wider. The threats to our health care system are masked only by the deep and frightening cuts to education in our province.

Even here in this motion, the official opposition only notes the threat to demonstration schools while failing to recognize that provincial schools which offer supports for students who are deaf or hard of hearing, blind, deafblind or have low vision are also on the Liberals' chopping block.

Two of these schools are in my riding of London, the Robarts provincial school and the Amethyst Demonstration School. The Minister of Education plans to close

them both. She has cherry-picked the schools according to her own words in this Legislature. She has indicated that her consultation process is rigged and is only focused on certain schools. True consultation would not see applications for the next school year suspended, nor would it include hiring freezes on particular schools as well.

I am so proud of the efforts of my colleague from Windsor West, who has done a fantastic job of opposing this unfair and highly damaging course of action—not just in my riding but all over the province.

We are pleased to have members of the opposition once again join our efforts in keeping these schools open. However, it has only been recently that their voices have been found. Frankly, it is entirely out of step with their long-standing history of privatization, austerity budgets and demands for smaller entitlements to now believe their call for investment in education. These are not the answers Ontarians are looking for. They deserve better, and they aren't getting it under this Liberal government.

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

Ms. Indira Naidoo-Harris: I am pleased to rise today and speak to the opposition's motion. When the finance minister announced the budget for 2016, I was proud of our government for achieving a plan that is both compassionate and fiscally responsible. Why? Because this budget is an investment in the people of Ontario. It's an investment in job growth and it's an investment in the long-term prosperity of our province.

This budget builds Ontario up, and it does it by keeping an eye on our spending. That's why I was surprised to see this opposition motion brought forward. There is something for everyone in this budget: something for youth, something for seniors, and something for indigenous people and middle- and low-income families. Our investments are significant, and we have a firm plan that is working: working towards eliminating the deficit and balancing the budget. This isn't easy, but we are on track.

Mr. Speaker, I don't understand why the opposition would be critical of that. Our strong fiscal management is achieving results, and the numbers prove it. Again, the government's plan to eliminate the deficit is working. We are on target.

In fact, Mr. Speaker, let me tell what the rating agencies said. Moody's confirmed, "Ontario's 2016 Budget Stays on Track to Balanced Budgets." And DBRS said, "2016 ... Budget: Economic Momentum Keeps Fiscal Plan on Track."

The deficit will be returned to balance in 2017-18. The deficit has already been reduced by close to $2 billion just since November. We have been ahead of our targets almost from the beginning. For the seventh year in a row, the province is on track to beat its deficit projection. What that means is this: The government is working hard and people are working hard right now to do the right thing. We are focusing on doing away with the deficit to build a strong future for our children and ensure a healthy Ontario economy.

This government's number one priority is growing the economy and creating jobs. Ontario is on track to generate more than 300,000 net new jobs by 2019, bringing total job creation to more than 900,000 since the recessionary low in 2009. On top of that, our unemployment rate continues to be below the national average. In fact, Ontario's economic growth is now outpacing national growth and is expected to continue being among the strongest in Canada over the next two years.

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Just think about it: This is a time when the rest of the country is talking about how challenging it is financially and how challenging it is for provinces when it comes to the economy, but Ontario is leading the way. We're the strongest in Canada. We're doing what governments should be doing: We're creating quality jobs and investing in our people, their skills and their talent.

A key part of ensuring Ontario's continued economic growth is investing in our youth and education. This budget preserves post-secondary education like never before. In fact, what we're doing now is historic. Starting in 2017-18, the new Ontario Student Grant will offer free tuition for students with financial need from families with incomes of $50,000 or less—free tuition.

Applause.

Ms. Indira Naidoo-Harris: I think we should be applauding, Minister.

This will open doors to thousands of students who may have thought they would never have the chance to attend college or university. We are ensuring that all our young people, regardless of their financial circumstances, have the ability to get a quality education. That's one of the reasons why I'm here. I'm here because I believe in fairness and I believe in doing everything we can to ensure that the less fortunate in our society get a helping hand and get a start. We're doing that.

It doesn't end there: Tuition will also be more affordable for middle-income families and mature or married students. Think about it: Those single-parent families—people trying to put food on the table and take care of their kids, who have been unable to really further themselves and their education—will now be able to head back to university and further their education and really give their families a start; give their children a bit of a chance to have a brighter future. We're doing the right thing.

We're also taking steps to improve special education in Ontario. Our government is doing a thorough review and speaking with parents across the province to make sure students and families get the services they need. We want to ensure that the system works. That's what Ontarians want; that's why they sent us here. And every now and then we have to do a checkup and ensure that we are doing the right thing. We've heard from Ontarians about what they want, and our government is listening.

In addition, we're investing in our people and jobs. In the 2016 budget, we have committed $160 billion over 12 years to invest in infrastructure projects. That is the largest infrastructure investment, not just in Ontario's history but in Canada's history. What are we doing? We're making infrastructure investments, we're investing

in our people and we're driving down the deficit. I can tell you that Ontarians know that we are on track. This will not only support the creation of 110,000 new jobs a year; it will also help to move goods more efficiently and allow people to spend more time at home with their families. We are creating jobs by building bridges, by building highways, by building roads, by building public transit and by building hospitals and schools.

Ontario residents also want to know they can depend on a strong and efficient health care system. Our government is increasing funding for our hospitals by $345 million, and we're supporting our health care by increasing our overall budget by close to 2% a year. That's a huge amount of money. This will help Ontarians get faster access to quality health care they can rely on.

The budget also adds $75 million over the next three years in community-based residential hospice and palliative care. That takes that number to $155 million. We're helping out our seniors and helping out families who are facing challenges when they're dealing with some of the things our seniors face when they're aging. We're also adding $10 million to the BSO. This helps personal support workers get the assistance and guidance they need by investing in them.

This government recognizes the vital role of our nurses in the delivery of quality health care in Ontario. Since 2003, we've had more than 26,000 new nurses employed in their field. This represents a growth of 23.7%, almost 24%. On top of this, the government is making the shingles vaccine free for eligible seniors. We're also adding $178 million for affordable housing. Now, not only is this a major step toward keeping seniors in good health, but it would save them about $170 and emergency room visits and hospitalizations.

Recognizing that our aging population is increasing, this budget also helps people achieve a more secure retirement. I can't tell you how important that is. We know that not all Ontarians have the ability to save over the years, so we're going to ensure that down the way, down the road, five years from now, 10, 20, those Ontarians aren't coming to us and needing support and assistance. We know that governments will have to step in and help, so what are we doing? We're looking ahead and we're making those investments now. We're making investments in the ORPP because we recognize that this is an investment in our future and it will help Ontarians. After all, why are we here? We're here to ensure that all Ontarians—not just the rich and the wealthy—retire and are able to settle down to a life that will give them a comfortable living after putting in work throughout their lifetimes for us.

Our government is investing strategically in the future of Ontario through responsible spending and debt reduction. First and foremost, we're securing job growth and a healthy economy. We're also staying firmly on track to eliminate the deficit in 2017-18.

All of this is being done alongside significant investments in education—as I mentioned—in health care, in housing, in our seniors and in our environment. We're taking care of people and their needs. That's why they gave us the mandate they did to be here today. We are trying to do the best we can in ensuring that we have a strong foundation for the future of the people of this province. This is a budget that is fiscally responsible, compassionate, and will result in the long-term prosperity of all residents in our province and our people.

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

Mr. Bill Walker: It's absolutely a pleasure to stand today and support my leader, Patrick Brown, and our PC caucus on an opposition day motion.

We came to this place to try to make it better. We've tried to work with the Liberals. Yet, at the end of the day, they didn't even give consideration to the three things we asked for in the budget. We're very concerned with where they're going. They continue to say it's about revenues. They've had record revenues every year: in 2014-15, $118.5 billion; they had $115.9 billion in 2013-14; and $113.4 billion in 2012-13. So it's not an issue of more money; it's how they address those.

We, as our leader said, have as a province just passed the $300-billion debt mark. That's absolutely shameful. To think of the money that we're putting on our grandkids and kids—and I hear members opposite talk about how much they're investing. At whose cost is that? They're trying to buy today, but they're selling our kids and grandkids down the road. There is $22,103 of debt for every man, woman and child living in Ontario: $12 billion. That's $1 billion a month that we're not spending on health care, on affordable housing, on education, on those people who are less fortunate or our seniors.

As seniors and long-term care critic, I've continually asked this government—they committed and promised to the people Ontario two elections ago to refurbish 30,000 long-term-care beds. Just as recently as the last estimates committee that I went to, I asked them to just even give me the plan of where those beds would be built and when. They can't even give me that.

There are a lot of concerns that I have. It come back to trust of this government, to ensure that they're actually listening. We asked them for a couple of very simplistic things: strive towards a credible plan for a balanced budget, make sure front-line health care services are there and reduce your deficit from year to year. They hit none of those. My constituents see this government, marked by scandal, waste and mismanagement, as a sorry state of affairs.

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Scandals: $1.1 billion wasted on the cancelled gas plants with not an iota of power to ever be shown to the people of Ontario; $2 billion spent wastefully on smart meters that, for the most part, we keep hearing from constituents across this great province don't work; $9 billion that they've tried to sell to the great people of Ontario on renewable energy, which we know is not accomplishing the job, is not accomplishing the efficiency, and is certainly not giving us the opportunity.

With this government, everyone assumed they were getting trains, roads and bridges in addition to public

utilities and better health care. Where is it? I still don't see any new transit here. I don't see, certainly, that we're getting any better roads or bridges. They keep talking about all of this wonderful infrastructure, and certainly they talk about all the municipalities that are so happy with this infrastructure. Well, I can tell you that the municipalities in Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound are certainly not happy with where they are with their infrastructure at this point.

Mr. Speaker, we've talked significantly in this House in regard to the sale of Hydro One. Today, the Deputy Premier stood up and said they listened to the people of Ontario. Eighty-five per cent of Ontarians are telling them, "Do not continue with the fire sale of Hydro One," and what are they doing? They're going out and promising that they are moving forward again. At the end of the day, it's going to be coincidental to see—and I think what they are trying to do is they're going to come out in 2018 and, with all these fire sales, perhaps balance the budget. But the Financial Accountability Officer—

Interjection.

Mr. Bill Walker: —is challenging them. They are selling the assets; they're selling everything that they can to try to make themselves look good for an election year. But I ask the question that I trust most Ontarians are asking: What happens after that? As my colleague from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke just said, it's a structural deficit. We need to address it and change it. We need to look beyond just the next election cycle. We need to not be self-serving and only looking at how we can make our books look good. We need to ensure it's there historically.

At the end of the day, this is happening—and this is being said by the Auditor General. He has identified that the net burden will lead to the crowding out of front-line services. The crowding-out is being realized as this government has fired over 1,000 nurses and threatens to close special education demonstration schools, which my colleague and seatmate from Prince Edward county is working diligently to try to stop. The Auditor General talked about hospital beds being closed, the costs of medication for seniors being raised, and funding for doctors being slashed because of this government's debt, deficit, mismanagement, scandal and incompetence.

In Barrie alone, 50 positions are going to be eliminated at Royal Victoria hospital. In London, St. Joseph's Health Care will cut 49 full-time positions, seven part-time and four casual. They will also cut 12 temporarily funded transitional care beds from Parkwood Institute. All across Ontario, LifeLabs is being forced to close its laboratory testing facilities because demand for testing has increased but the funding has not. It only makes sense, with our baby boom demographic moving toward us at a fairly rapid pace, that the costs are going to continue, and yet they're cutting service. Does that make sense to you, Mr. Speaker? I would suggest, in the conversations I've had with you, definitely not. In my own backyard, Hanover LifeLabs actually reduced operating hours. We have one of the highest seniors' populations in the province. Again, it only makes sense that they're going to need more care as they get older, with the more challenges they face with their health care, and yet there are less hours to serve them.

It truly is mind-boggling to be in this House every day and hear this government applaud themselves and say how wonderful and how rosy it is. I'm wondering if they ever walk outside and actually have chats with the average Ontarian who can't pay their hydro bill that has doubled, tripled and quadrupled over their 12 years of mismanagement. They are predicting it's going to double to triple over the next four years again. Have they talked to small, medium or large businesses about the costs of operating and why businesses are really struggling to maintain? They try to throw it back on our government as opposition, that we don't stand up for Ontario. No, it's exactly the reverse of that. We are standing here to say we want Ontario to be the leader of Confederation again. But we have to make decisions and we have to make choices, at the end of the day, that are going to ensure we have the care and the support for people at the time they need them. We can't continue to run deficits and just say, "We'll get to it later."

Those pages in front of you, Mr. Speaker: We're burdening and saddling them with the poor decisions of this government today, and they are going to pay for that for many, many years. I don't have grandchildren yet, but I'm already fearful that we're going to actually put them in a situation where they may never get out of debt.

We want and we will continue to call for this government to present a credible plan on affordable energy, proper management of health care and a credible plan to balance the budget. We'll ask them to vote for this opposition day motion to ensure that that happens going forward.

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

Ms. Peggy Sattler: It is a pleasure to rise today, on behalf of the people I represent in London West, to speak to the motion before this House that has been brought to us by the leader of the official opposition. Certainly, there are a number of references in this motion that resonate with me. The motion talks about "scandal, waste and mismanagement, in particular with the gas plants, eHealth, Ornge and smart meters."

I am somebody who came to this House in 2013, when concerns about the mismanagement of gas plants was front and centre in the minds of the people of London West. London West was, quite frankly, ground zero for the gas plant scandal, because it was Chris Bentley's resignation that created the opportunity for me to run in the by-election. London West was also ground zero for the diluted chemotherapy drugs. Over half of the patients who received those diluted drugs lived in London; they were going to London Health Sciences Centre.

So, Speaker, I know something about the impact of Liberal scandal and mismanagement. I know how that affects people in my riding of London West. Quite frankly, right now, almost three years since my election, I

still feel that London is at ground zero in terms of Liberal mismanagement, particularly in the health care sector. You can't get up in the morning in my community and open the London Free Press without reading another scathing indictment of how government has failed the citizens of this province and, in particular, how it is failing the residents of my community in London.

Just last December, before the Christmas break, we heard about 500 surgeries being delayed and postponed, at the direction of the government, because of the government's flawed funding formula that allocated a set amount for surgeries regardless of the need of patients to get these surgical procedures done. Hospitals were instructed to trickle patients over a 12-month period; to make sure to space them out so that the funding would last. Quite frankly, this is contrary to what a lot of doctors believe they should do—believe it is their commitment to patients—which is to address a patient's need; if a patient has a need for surgery, to get that surgery completed in a timely manner so that the patient is the purpose for the health care system. The system doesn't exist without the needs of the patients. Instead, we saw hospitals directed to slow the queue of patients; in particular, to hold off elective surgeries that potentially could very seriously compromise the health of patients.

One of my constituents was waiting for a hip replacement. He was told it was going to be almost two years. In the meantime, his doctor told him it was quite likely that he wouldn't be able to walk any longer by the time he was able to access that surgery. It could potentially seriously undermine his physical well-being. He was put at much greater risk of falls and any number of complications that could arise because of the delay in that surgery.

That was in December. Later, in February, just a couple of months ago, we heard about the shortage of hospice beds and palliative care in my region. There are 26 beds in the South West LHIN. Experts say that three times as many palliative care beds are needed to address the aging population and the demographic realities of people as they age and spend their final years. We know that without access to these palliative beds, people end up spending their final days in hospital.

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In 2012 to 2013, which is the most recent data available, 54,230 patient days were spent in London hospital beds among palliative patients who were unable to have their right to die at home respected, who were unable to access a palliative care bed because we don't have a system that can support them in doing that. Instead, we have a system that spends thousands of dollars more on hospital beds because we don't have the community care available.

In March, just last month, we heard about the demand for psychiatric care at Victoria Hospital, which required a classroom to be converted into an emergency ward because the hospital was being overrun by critically ill psychiatric patients who didn't have access to beds, because once again, we saw that 22 of those beds that are in the psychiatric emergency ward were occupied by people who have nowhere else to go. There was no way to admit new patients who were coming into the ward.

We heard about a patient with Alzheimer's who had to spend eight days on the floor of the emergency ward. At the same time the Alzheimer Society of London and Middlesex is reporting a 50% increase in caseloads over the last two years because of the growing need for dementia specialization to help people with complex needs in our community.

There is a lot that has to be done to address the crisis in health care in the province and in my community, and this motion won't do anything that is needed to be done.

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

Hon. Steven Del Duca: Always a delight for me to have the opportunity to, as I'm fond of saying, stand in my place and lend my voice to the discussion and the debate that's taking place this afternoon here in the Legislature on an opposition day motion brought forward, as I understand it, from the leader of the official opposition. I think I have that correct.

I've had a chance to hear some of the discussion and debate that has taken place over the course of the afternoon. I know some of my colleagues have, I believe, already spoken and more will be speaking after me on this particular motion.

I know that you know, Speaker, that I've served here in the Legislature for the last three years and a bit—almost four years coming up this fall. But when I read a motion like this one—I say it still as a relative newcomer to this Legislature—I have to admit that I'm a little bit taken aback. I'm a little bit shocked.

This is one of those motions, as I glance down at the text of the motion itself, that strikes me as more than passing strange. The leader of the Conservative opposition here in this chamber—notwithstanding the very important and pertinent history that took place or that existed or that occurred when that party was last in power—now seems to be in a situation where he has put forward a motion suggesting, rather magically, that we should, like they, the Conservatives, did when last in power, slash and burn and cut to the bone, literally, core public services in many important sectors and at the same time balance the books because of that slashing and burning, but at the same time invest in health care and education.

I'm paraphrasing, but that is essentially the gist of it: "balance the budget ... pay down the debt ... preserve quality education and health services." That's actually a quote from the last paragraph of this particular motion. Again, it's a bit of that bizarre kind of fictitious approach to governing.

Though I'm still a relatively new MPP at three and a half or close to four years, I have been around the political scene as an activist in our party for a number of years. I can remember working in Toronto on the campaign in the riding of Willowdale in 1995, when then-leader of the third party, Mike Harris, went on to—not Michael Harris,

but Mike Harris—put forward the Common Sense Revolution.

This actually has a significant flavour of what was put in front of the people of Ontario in 1995: "We're going to be able to reduce your tax burden"—at that time I think it was a 30% tax cut that they had committed to—"we're going to cut the debt, we're not going to take any money out of health care or education and we're going to get the economy back on track and do all those magical things."

People of Ontario, for all kinds of reasons that I won't get into this afternoon in debate, chose to support, as they can in a democracy, that particular—and who wouldn't, frankly? Who wouldn't support that kind of political fiction, as we learned that it turned out to be post-1995?

Because, of course, we know, looking back in retrospect, that over the next eight or nine years—whatever the exact term was through both the 1995 and 1999 campaigns—that the Conservative Party that Mr. Brown now leads, which has put forward this motion today, did exactly the opposite in many respects of what they had committed to the people of Ontario to do. Not only did they literally eviscerate core public services—they did, Speaker—like health care and education; not only did they mock and ridicule key participants in the health care system by comparing, for example, nurses to hula hoops; not only did they close hospitals in community after community after community; they did all of these things and so much more.

I remember the quote that the former Premier used during the 1995 campaign—I'm blessed with a good memory, Speaker: "We will not take one cent out of the classroom for our education system." Imagine that, eight, nine years later. Imagine how those people in communities—including my own community—who back then supported that particular approach must have felt when they saw, again, the chaos and the crisis that was created in health care, in education and in all of those other crucial areas that people rely on their provincial government to provide.

I could say, as Minister of Transportation, that I think when people look back to that era, they realize that when politicians come forward and either create election platforms or motions, such as the motion that we're debating here this afternoon, that are based on that kind of fiction, on that kind of political wizardry, I guess, if you can call it that—people now know better in the province of Ontario.

In the transportation realm alone, not just health care and education, they know that when any politician walks out there and says, "I'm going to find a way to magically cut everything, keep your taxes low, charge nothing else for anything else and still massively increase your transit options"—when that kind of politician, who is not being, perhaps, as transparent as they otherwise should be, gets the reins of power, the people of this province know what happens. They know what happens because they've seen it before when the Conservatives were last in power in this place. They saw subway projects brought forward by the NDP when they were in power not only stopped—that would be difficult enough to grasp; I say this as someone who has lived here in this region my whole life—or delayed or paused, but actually cancelled. The Eglinton subway line was cancelled and the tunnels that had been burrowed to that point filled in.

Imagine that today, here in the province of Ontario, here in the GTHA, we are spending $5.3 billion to build the Eglinton Crosstown LRT, the single largest public transit project in Ontario history. We're doing it not only because it's necessary and it will create jobs and improve quality of life and be transformative for this region; we are doing it because 10, 15, 20 years after the fact, we are trying to make up and we will successfully make up for the horrific mistakes of the Conservative ideology that underpins the motion we are debating today, the Conservative notion that you can kind of have it all and that asks of people, the electorate and voters, to just close your eyes and wish hard enough and everything will work out. That's on the investment side in health care and education and in transit and transportation and so many other realms.

The fiction doesn't end on the investment side; the fiction ends on the fiscal side. Because, of course, even if you didn't serve as an elected official in this chamber back in 2003, it would be hard for people not to remember, notwithstanding the fact that in the last year or so in which they held power, they told everybody—when their then-finance minister and some who still serve in that caucus today in this chamber were in that caucus then, they said literally to the people of Ontario, "The books are balanced because of our Conservative ideology, because we've managed to keep spending down and cut taxes and build the economy." They claim all of those things took place, but we know, really and truly, that they didn't quite take place the way they suggested they did.

We know, at the end of it all, that when then-Premier Dalton McGuinty called in the former Auditor General—and, by the way, today's motion is replete with mentions of today's Auditor General, but when the then-retired Auditor General was brought in to review the books that were left—

Interjection: Mr. Peters.

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Hon. Steven Del Duca: Mr. Peters, Erik Peters. We know that on the fiscal side, Mr. Speaker, that Conservative ideology really is more myth than fact; and this has been proven in jurisdictions not just here in Ontario, but well beyond Ontario. We know that, notwithstanding their claims that their magical formula had done all of these wonderful things—which it didn't, on the investment side. We also know that in fact there was a $6-billion hidden deficit that existed. It wasn't me saying it and it wasn't the former Premier saying it. It was, in fact, a retired Auditor General from the province of Ontario.

It begs the question. It really begs the question for those watching at home, certainly those who live in my community of Vaughan: Why would Ontarians ever want to go back to that kind of chaos, that kind of fictitious political environment in which political leaders put

forward motions like the one that we're debating today and, back then, as I referenced a second ago, put forward platforms that suggest that this philosophy that's here very clearly at the heart of the motion that Mr. Brown has brought forward is the exact same ideology? It's the exact same philosophy that weaves through it. The difference, I would argue, is that in 1995 the good people of Ontario, for reasons at that time that were germane and relevant, didn't have—did not have—at their fingertips the sense of the history of what had taken place when this kind of ideology was foisted upon them.

Today, in 2016, in 2017 and in 2018, the people of Ontario, the people that we all represent, whether they're from Niagara Falls or from Vaughan or from Hamilton or Kitchener-Waterloo, wherever they reside in the province, know that the philosophy that's at the heart of not only this motion but of Mr. Brown himself and that Conservative opposition—they know that the numbers don't add up. They never add up. And we get less investment. We get nurses ridiculed. We have schools that don't open, schools that are crumbling. We have fewer hospitals opening.

Not that many months ago, I was proud to stand in my community—actually, right at the edge of Canada's Wonderland—alongside the current Minister of Health. We released the request for proposals for the brand new Mackenzie Vaughan Hospital. This is a project that I've been working on not only as the MPP for this community, but also, I would say, as a former activist or volunteer in my community. We released the RFP. We will start construction of that hospital later this year. This is just one example of a philosophy and a government and an approach to building the province up, where we don't base our assumptions, we don't base our philosophy, we don't base our platforms or our budgets, we don't base our debate in this chamber, on fiction.

I guess if I was being generous, Speaker—and I try from time to time to be generous to both opposition parties in this chamber. But I would say that perhaps it's forgivable because Mr. Brown is a relative newcomer. I'm a newcomer, but he's even more of a newcomer to this chamber. I would have thought that as someone who has served, in his case, in public life for a number of years in his home community, in the federal House of Commons and now here in the Legislature, after seeing various forms of governing and approaches to this—and coming from a community as he does in Simcoe, from Barrie, from that whole area up there, where I was last week—I would have thought that Mr. Brown would understand that past approaches to getting it so wrong as a Conservative are not the best way to go forward.

Alas, Speaker, we see with this motion here today that we're debating that, in fact, he hasn't. In fact, he's trying to go right back to that horrible past where we had crises; we had chaos; we weren't building the province up; we weren't fixing the fiscal issues that were here in the province at that time. Deficits were left over; hospitals were closed; schools were crumbling; nurses and doctors ridiculed; teachers ridiculed—so much more, Speaker.

It is fundamentally why since 2003, at every single opportunity when the people of Ontario have had the chance to consider, do they want that approach that Mr. Brown and his party are espousing today with this motion, or do they want an Ontario Liberal government approach that builds the province up, makes rational and balanced investments, tries to work with everyone else and move the province forward, four times—four times, Speaker—in 2003, 2007, 2011 and 2014, it would come as no surprise to any sensible Ontarian that the people of this province made the right choice.

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

Mr. Michael Harris: Thank you, Speaker, for that enthusiastic introduction today.

I appreciate the opportunity to stand before you in this House to discuss an issue that is important, not only to my constituents in Kitchener–Conestoga and Waterloo region, but to all Ontarians: this province's crippling debt.

Although this issue is current and relevant, its history is deeply ingrained in this province. Please let me provide some historical context into the looming debt we are all up against. It was CBC's Mike Crawley who recently pointed out that the last time an Ontario finance minister balanced the budget, George W. Bush was in the White House, the iPhone wasn't yet available in Canada—good thing; I'm the home of BlackBerry, of course—Mats Sundin was captain of the Maple Leafs, people were still renting DVDs from Blockbuster and Justin Bieber was performing in talent shows on the steps in Stratford.

Unfortunately for everyone in Ontario—my parents' generation, my generation and my children's generation—we can't even begin to have a conversation regarding a finance minister balancing a budget because, quite frankly, it is that far out of reach as it stands today. This is because the Liberal government keeps making the same mistakes over and over again. As we have said in this House on multiple occasions, life is harder under the Liberals, and this has been true for a staggering 12 years.

When the Liberals took power in 2003, Ontario was the seventh most indebted province. Thirteen years of Liberal rule later, Ontario is now the second most indebted province after Quebec. By next year, we're predicted to be the most indebted province in Canada. This government's fiscal mismanagement means more spending to pay down more debt interest. It means that nine cents of every tax dollar collected by the provincial government in revenue is being spent on interest payments. It means less money available to invest in the priorities of Ontarians, both now and in the future.

In fact, this year, according to the Wynne government's own projections, interest on debt payments will cost Ontario taxpayers $1 billion every month. Can you imagine? Again, the interest payments on Ontario's debt have now become the third-largest expenditure in this government. That does not go toward health care, education, social services or infrastructure. That goes

nowhere but to the bank; to foreign credit bondholders who invest in their infrastructure, not ours. It goes to banks that are uncertain about Ontario's future. And why shouldn't they be uncertain? We haven't kept our fiscal house in order for over a decade under Liberal rule.

Yet the spending continues as the Liberals just keep swiping the province's credit card. Swiping or tapping it just everywhere, piling up more debt on the next generation: swipe, tap, swipe—out of touch with reality and out of touch with how it affects the people of Ontario. As interest spending continues, the cuts to front-line services continue. We see the continued toll from ongoing wasted spending that has taken funding from where it is most needed and led to cuts throughout the province.

The Premier was elected on a promise of no cuts to front-line health care workers. Yet, again and again, we see the complete opposite, with Grand River Hospital in my region being the latest to announce cuts: 30 vacant positions being slashed and layoff notices given to 38 others, including nurses. Make no mistake: These cuts fall at the feet of this Liberal government and its fiscal mismanagement. Unfortunately, when billions are wasted on gas plants and non-existent eHealth registries, it means less for the priorities we actually care about most.

Quite frankly, there is an ongoing concern with the way this government handles its money, and the spending choices made for our health sector continue to highlight that reality. With all our promise and potential, this reality hits hard. But what hits even harder is that, for generations, Ontarians have been paying into a system that is expected to take care of us when we can't take care of ourselves. It is supposed to take care of our children when they're making their start in their adult lives, and yet because of years of fiscal mismanagement under the Liberal government, there will be nothing left to take care of them.

1650

We live in a world where parents expect to provide their children with better lives than they had themselves, but after 12 years of tax-and-spend Liberal rule, we will be leaving them with less. That is not the cycle of human nature. It is not the cycle of fiscal responsibility. It is not the cycle of social responsibility, and it is not a cycle I feel comfortable with continuing as a member of this House.

The Liberals are mortgaging our future—Ontario's future—on a generation that doesn't even have a running start due to government fiscal financial mismanagement. In fact, the Premier herself has stated that nobody wants to imagine a future where their children and grandchildren don't have a future. Well, we couldn't agree more, Speaker; she's right. It's not only our children; it's also our grandchildren and future generations who are going to be paying for the Liberal fiscal mismanagement in Ontario.

It is because of this that the opposition has come here today for one reason and one reason only: We actually want to build a better Ontario. The first step is finally taking aim at getting this province's finances in order. The Premier needs to clean up the mess she and her predecessor have created. It's time for immediate action to balance a budget that hasn't been balanced in their 12 years and time for real solutions to pay down the provincial debt to allow investment into our priorities, such as community health care, and remove the heavy debt burden this government has allowed to compromise the future of our next generation.

Speaker, I appreciate the time given today. I want to remind those watching at home that everything we do we put on a credit card, and it's those future generations that will be concerned most about the actions we make today.

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

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: It is with great pleasure that I get to stand in the House today on behalf of my constituents of Windsor West to join the debate on PC opposition day.

I don't think it's a secret that life is getting harder for most Ontarians with the rise of unstable and low-paying jobs or, as the Liberal government likes to call it, a contemporary mobile workforce; the rising cost of hydro, which is only going to increase as the Liberals charge full steam ahead to sell off our public hydro; and the cuts to services, such as health care and supports for families of children with special needs. It is clear not only to New Democrats but people across the province that the Liberals are not building Ontario up. In fact, they are tearing Ontario down.

The pre-budget hearings were a farce. Over 140 witnesses appeared in person and another 114 written submissions were presented before the all-party legislative committee. That's not including the scores of people who participated in the Minister of Finance's separate consultations.

The budget was tabled far earlier than in previous years. Rather than being released in April or May, the budget was tabled in February. Factor in the reality that the budget is sent to the printer many days prior to public release, and that the entire document has to be translated to French. Key decisions are made well in advance of sending the budget document to print, and it is clear to Ontarians that the budget was already written during the time the Liberal government was supposedly consulting with the public. What this tells us in this House and those across the province is that the Liberal government wasted the time of the members on the legislative committee, the time and efforts of those who presented to the committee in person, and they disregarded the written submissions.

For a government that claims to be open and transparent, they aren't behaving in a manner that is open to input and ideas, and they aren't transparent about the fact that, like the rush to sell off our public hydro system, despite 80% of Ontarians saying they don't support the plan, they really don't care about what Ontarians want. They only care about what the Liberal government and their wealthy friends want.

While I'm on the topic of the sell-off of Hydro One, I'd like to speak about the Conservative Party's current call to stop the sale. Speaker, I don't think anyone in this room is fooled by the smoke-and-mirrors approach the

PCs are taking on the hydro sell-off. Everyone in this chamber knows that the Conservatives also want to sell our publicly owned hydro; they have their own plan on how to do it and which friends of theirs it will benefit.

I'd like to talk about jobs for a moment. Chrysler, FCA, in Windsor, in my riding specifically, recently had 1,200 new hires, and that's not including the spinoff jobs from the feeder plants. Those were both production workers and skilled trades. The Liberal government stood up and claimed victory for those hires. Yet, they didn't acknowledge that it was the hard work of the people within the plant itself that led to the high production, the quality product and, then, the new hires.

On the topic of auto jobs, the new leader of the PCs, when he was a member of the federal party, stood with his fellow members in caucus and did nothing—nothing—to support our auto sector. In fact, they preferred to watch workers in Canada, one by one, get on the unemployment line. The previous leader of the Ontario PCs, when asked about supporting the auto sector, said, "We don't pick winners and losers; let it die."

Albert Einstein once said that logic will get you from point A to point B, but imagination will get you everywhere. The PCs clearly have an imagination as they don't appear to have a real stance on anything. Once upon a time, in an election not too far away from today, everyone knew clearly what the Conservatives stood for. But lately, thanks largely to their new leader, Patrick Brown, they seem to feel whichever way they think will get them elected and form government in 2018. The problem with that is that what they say and do from one day to another, sometimes hour by hour, is frequently contradictory.

There's another saying, Speaker, and it certainly applies to the PC Party: "When you stand for nothing, you will fall for everything." Clearly, the PC Party doesn't truly stand for anything anymore and has fallen for the idea that Ontarians would accept a government that says whatever they feel necessary to get elected and then do whatever they want, even if it contradicts what they claim to stand for leading up to and during an election campaign.

I think it's on that premise that we are here today debating this motion. If the PCs are pointing out that this way of thinking isn't working for the Liberals, then perhaps they need to take a long, hard look in the mirror, figure out what they really stand for and proudly share that with Ontarians. They should be proud of their stance on topics important to Ontarians, shout it from the rooftop and wear it like a badge of honour. Do away with the smoke and mirrors and stop trying to fool Ontarians: Tell us how you really feel.

On the topic of health care, nearly 12,000 nurses have been fired across the province. Under this Liberal government, we can likely expect more cuts. In Windsor, 169 RNs were handed their pink slips on Family Day this year—Family Day, Speaker. The Liberal government has picked a fight with our doctors; wait times for long-term care beds are out of control; and many people with mental health issues can't access the community supports they need. Seniors were under the threat of having their prescription drug costs increased by nearly double. I'd like to say thank you to the thousands of Ontarians who worked with New Democrats to pressure this government to reduce course on that wrong-headed plan.

The head of the Ontario Dental Association told us that Sarnia's hospital has been forced to cut operating room time for dentists to practically nothing. Speaker, as a former dental assistant, I can tell you that dental health plays a key part in overall health. To be cutting operating-room time for dentists, who are often doing procedures when we have children with rampant decay and they need to be put out in order to have that treated, or when we have young children who need a root canal or an extraction and it can't be done in-office—if these conditions are not treated right away, they can affect the overall health of a patient. In fact, many don't know that if an abscess in the mouth is left untreated, it can cause infection in your body and you can die.

1700

The Conservatives speak about the need to stop cuts to our public health care, to ensure access to health care services for all Ontarians, and halt the losses of our front-line health care providers, such as nurses. The Conservatives ran on cutting 100,000 public sector jobs in the 2014 election campaign. That wasn't that long ago. I ask them: How many doctors and nurses would have been part of the 100,000 job cuts and how much would it cost taxpayers out of pocket for the health care services they needed once the Conservatives privatized health care? What would be the real cost to the physical and mental well-being of Ontarians once the Conservatives satisfy their high-priced corporate friends by selling out our public health care system?

I have limited time to speak, so I want to speak about something else that's near and dear to my heart, which is also, coincidentally, my critic portfolio: education.

The motion before us talks about supporting education. With a cut in education of $430 million in the 2016 budget and prior cuts in previous years that total over $1 billion—that's $1 billion in the last three years—it is clear that the Liberal government is not investing in our education system. We see cut after cut after cut which result in a loss of programming and a loss of the front-line workers, the education workers in our system.

In order to truly and support our publicly funded education system, you must acknowledge, appreciate and respect the invaluable service of education workers: the front-line workers that are the heart and soul of our education system, the very people working in our schools and other educational facilities who clean up after, console, counsel, encourage, educate and help shape the minds of the students our education system was built to serve.

It is very clear that both the Conservatives and the Liberals don't value education workers. We only have to look to legislation passed in September 2012 and again in 2015. The first bill, which passed in 2012, imposed contracts on education workers and deprived them of their rightful process of collective bargaining. Both Bill 115 and, later, Bill 103 stripped teachers of their right to

strike. The government threatened to dock the pay of the lowest-paid education workers in the education sector if they exercised their right—and that's important—to do their job exactly as described in their employment contracts.

Language about education workers used by both the Liberals and the Conservatives in the recent past has created a very negative and unfortunate view of the professionals we trust in the care and education of our children and grandchildren. They use education workers as collateral damage to gain political points.

To finish, I want to draw attention to the piece in the motion that speaks to keeping demonstration schools open. Demonstration schools are in place to assist students with severe learning disabilities. It's not that these students can't learn; they can and they do. In fact, with the specialized supports provided in demonstration schools, students not only succeed but they excel.

Demonstration schools provide focused supports and learning that isn't available in a student's home school within a district school board. Demonstration schools provide an educational environment that is vital to the success of the students who attend them and is complementary to the education that students receive once they finish their program and return to their home school. Myself and my New Democrat colleagues fully support keeping demonstration schools open. There is no doubt about that, Speaker.

We also support and have led the fight, along with members of the deaf community, to not only draw attention to the importance of provincial schools for the deaf but to keep them open as well. Provincial schools for the deaf were left out of this motion. Provincial schools provide an ASL—American sign language—or QSL—Quebec sign language—environment where students who are deaf or hard of hearing thrive. It is vital to the success of these students that they be provided an education in an ASL or QSL environment.

It was a huge oversight on the Conservatives' part to leave provincial schools for the deaf out of this motion. I tabled a motion on March 22 of this year calling on the government to recognize the success and importance of both provincial and demonstration schools, to ensure that no provincial or demonstration school would close as a result of current consultations and to reopen the enrolment at all provincial and demonstration schools. I hope that I can count on my colleagues in both the Conservative and the Liberal caucuses to support my motion when it is debated on April 14. I thank you for the time that I've had to speak today.

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

Hon. James J. Bradley: It's interesting that this comes forward, because this particular motion reminds me of the commercial you used to see on television years ago that said to spend like Santa and save like Scrooge. That's what this motion is all about.

When the member for West Lincoln and Glanbrook was the leader—we know him in Niagara Peninsula as Tim Hudak—at least he was consistent. You knew where he stood. You could disagree—and by gosh, I disagreed with my friend from West Lincoln many times—but you knew where he stood. He was consistent. He honestly believed that which he was putting forward. You didn't have this show in question period of one question coming up, "Please save money; please eliminate the deficit; please cut taxes. Oh, by the way, spend on the following things." So I admire him for that.

I admire him, as well, because he was prepared to take on some difficult issues. When they asked about GO trains to Niagara, candidates were saying, "Yes, it should happen." I was one of those. At least, the Conservative Party said, "No, we don't agree with that. We have to wait until the budget is balanced before we'll consider it." That was a tough position to take, but our friend from West Lincoln took that stance, and you knew where he stood. Similarly, I must say, on the West Lincoln hospital, during one budget interview that they had, the press asked him, "Would you then say that we must spend money on the West Lincoln hospital?" He conceded that, to be consistent, he couldn't do that. He was in favour of it, let me say that, and he worked for it, but there was the consistency.

What we've got now is somebody who has parachuted in from Ottawa and who was part of a government that, in fact, was all fiscal conservatism, with the odd exception. You've noticed what has come with that, because you remember the very toxic tenor of debate in the House of Commons. People talked about the hyper-partisanship that was in the House of Commons. It really hadn't permeated here very much. Well, you see that permeated here now—

Interjection.

Hon. James J. Bradley: My friend from Belleville was a very moderate person in those days when Mr. Hudak was the leader. Now we see this hyper-partisanship coming in to Ontario.

I thought Michael Warren best captured that in a column that he wrote in the Toronto Star on March 21, 2016. I'll quote selectively from it because I don't have the time to read the whole column. One of the items says:

"Even his staunchest supporters admit Brown is enigmatic. More than that, he's shown a willingness to compromise long-held ideas, if that's what it takes to advance his political career.

"In the space of a couple of years, he has swung from a strident, social conservative to a Liberal-lite leader with unnerving ease. Is Brown simply trying to redefine himself? Or, is he a political chameleon who's willing to advance almost any policy to gain power?"

Then he goes on to say, "One Tory, who has known Brown for years, summed him up this way: 'You never really know what he stands for or what he's up to. I can't decide yet if that's clever-smart or if it's cunning and'"—I can't say the other word because it's unparliamentary, but it's a word that we couldn't use in this House. In respect for this House, I won't quote it.

At the end comes this conclusion about his changes in thought since he was a member of the Harper government:

"These are welcome changes. But they lack authenticity. Brown leaves the impression he's just road-testing his latest attempt to reposition himself and his party.

"He says he's a political pragmatist. But in reality, he's more an empty vessel willing to play the role of right-wing zealot in Ottawa and social liberal at Queen's Park. I can't think of a past PC Premier who's won with that strategy."

Even Mike Harris—and heaven knows that when I was on the other side, I was critical of many of the things that Mike Harris did, but you knew where he stood. We have an opposition resolution this afternoon that is all over the map.

1710

Interjection.

Hon. James J. Bradley: As I say, one part of it says—and I know the member for Belleville will be concerned about this, the Yankee fan will be concerned about this, but on one hand, he says, "Spend, spend, spend. Let's have our members get up and ask spending questions." That's legitimate for the NDP, because the NDP don't care about the deficit; they care about investments and various things in Ontario. Now, their former Liberal—sorry, a Freudian slip there. Their small-c conservative leader, Mr. Mulcair, said he was against deficits in the federal election. Even the present leader—

Interjection.

Hon. James J. Bradley: No, you're neutral when you're in the chair. The leader of the New Democratic Party was even sounding as though she was quite cautious and conservative in the last campaign about deficit. She had $600 million worth of undefined cuts that were going to happen. But at least they're consistent now. They say, "Spend more money," and they want money spent on all these things. Heaven knows where that money is going to come from, but they're consistent. They are—

Interjections.

Hon. James J. Bradley: Oh, I'm sorry. It will be, "This one corporate tax increase will pay for everything in the province"; I know that. Anyway, I'm not here to pick on the NDP, because it's not their resolution, and I enjoyed parts of the speech of the previous member.

I was reading the New Yorker, and a good column that describes what's happening today. I was going to see if the other member was here. It really reminds me of the Conservative resolution this afternoon. It's by James Surowiecki, and it says:

"In 1980, the third-party presidential candidate John Anderson succinctly summed up Ronald Reagan's promise to simultaneously cut taxes, increase defense spending, keep government services intact, and balance the budget: 'Reagan's budget is constructed with mirrors.' Sure enough, Reagan presided over eight years of deficits that tripled the national debt. Yet the Republican faith that you can tax-cut your way to deficit reduction has never dimmed. This year's Republican race is dominated by candidates whose budgetary plans make Reagan's look downright reasonable.

"Not surprisingly, the most extreme plan is Donald Trump's. He would slash taxes across the board, reducing revenues by nine and a half trillion dollars over the next decade, according to estimates by the nonpartisan Tax Policy Center. Yet he has also promised to balance the budget, protect social security and medicare, and not cut services. How? Well, he says he'll get rid of 'waste and fraud and abuse,' and abolish the Department of Education and the Environmental Protection Agency. And he thinks that the tax cuts would spur an economic boom, so that revenues will actually increase."

Does that sound familiar to members of the House? Have you read the resolution this afternoon? That's what it sounds like.

The article goes on to say: "This is pure fantasy. Those spending cuts would save just a tiny fraction of what he claims, and the revenue projections have no basis in reality. Yet, unrealistic as Trump's ideas are, they differ from those of his chief opponents only in degree, not in kind. Marco Rubio wants to couple a $6.8-trillion tax cut with significant increases in defense spending, while Ted Cruz has proposed an $8.6-trillion tax cut with—guess what?—significant increases in defense spending" at the same time. So Ted Cruz has said that. "Naturally, Rubio and Cruz have been vague about where they'd find the necessary trillions in cuts, and about how what the government does would be affected." Does that sound familiar again? It does to me. "This is par for the course. Paul Ryan's infamous budget of 2012 would have effectively eliminated ... all the federal government's non-defense discretionary spending, even as he insisted that he wanted to 'strengthen' the social safety net and keep the government investing in infrastructure.

"The candidates are engaged in a familiar dance. Voters always say that they're worried about the deficit, but, as Brendan Nyhan, an assistant professor of government at Dartmouth, put it" to this writer, "they're skittish when cuts are specified: 'They may have a symbolic preference for cutting spending, but that's different from their actual preference for spending on programs they like.'"

This article goes on, and it just describes what the new leader is all about. I suspect that's why—somebody over there will correct me—28 members of the caucus supported the former member, now known as Christine Elliott, who was appointed by this government, by the way, as the patient advocate and is a very good person, but the others did not.

I don't want to get into this subject because it's not on today's topic. But when I was going down the list of contributors to the leadership campaign of the Conservative leader, I couldn't find, I think, maybe one or two members of the government caucus itself who made a contribution. I think most of those members, when they were elected, were consistent Conservatives. They didn't believe that somehow you could spend like Santa and save like Scrooge. They believed, instead, that this was a total contradiction. I know that when my cabinet col-

league Mr. Mauro has a chance to speak, he will elaborate on this.

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

Hon. Mitzie Hunter: Point of order.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Point of order, Associate Minister of Finance.

Hon. Mitzie Hunter: Thank you, Speaker. I appreciate your acknowledgement today. I notice that our galleries are not very full today. I know we have the mother of one of our pages here today, but I also wanted to make special recognition of someone who has taken the time to sit in the members' east gallery. It's Jaclyn Wight. She's an accounting student at Centennial College, which is in my riding of Scarborough–Guildwood. This is her first time in the Legislature, so please welcome her.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): It's not normally a point of order, but we'll let it go.

Further debate.

Mr. Lorne Coe: We've had some previous speakers talk about the past, but I want to take you to a period of the Whitby–Oshawa by-election that took place on February 11, 2016. During that by-election, residents in that riding sent a strong message, didn't they? They sent a very strong message. They called for the Liberal government to present a credible plan to balance the budget and take immediate action to pay down the debt while preserving quality education and health services. Well, Speaker, we're still waiting, aren't we?

The overriding obligation of every elected official in this assembly is to include the requirement that financial resources of the province are managed to the highest standards. We must always make certain that we strive to balance our bank account, just as we must do with our own family budgets. Living within our means is the target. The obligation also extends to the provision of services to the residents of the province, whether it's health care, education or security, but we must, as legislators, balance the needs of individuals and groups with the duty to always exercise fiscal prudence. If we don't do those things, I believe we fail the people who elected us to office.

Our job is difficult to do. Well, it's easy to do it poorly, too. That's what this Liberal government has accomplished. The annual deficit escalates, and the debt along with it. It doesn't take a high-paid economist to know that even the slightest hike in interest rates could have an extremely devastating impact on the provincial debt service burden, but there is a second significant hurdle to overcome. We must now not only strive to eliminate deficit financing, but we must also find means to pay down the bloated debt that has accumulated under the watch of the Liberal stewards.

1720

Health care in this province is being devastated as a direct consequence of the scandal, waste and mismanagement of this government. We hear it every day in our constituency offices. We simply don't have the funds now to adequately address the needs of our aging population. We know there's an aging demographic across this province, and we see it every day. Who is now looking out for our seniors who over the years have enriched the social, cultural and civic life of Ontario communities? We have a lot more to do, and we have to be better at managing the financial resources entrusted to us by the taxpayers.

I support the call to have the Liberal government present a truly credible plan to balance the budget, to create a sound debt reduction plan and to provide a strategy to preserve quality education and health services for the province. Speaker, what's clear is that life continues to be harder under this Liberal government.

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

Mr. Wayne Gates: I'm certainly pleased to rise on the PC opposition day motion, so I'll start. Mr. Speaker, thank you for allowing me to rise and speak on this motion today. It covers quite a bit of ground, so I'll talk on just a few of the topics, some of which I believe are the most important topics in the province today.

I don't think anyone in this chamber disagrees that we have to be smart with taxpayers' dollars and that we have to work on a plan to bring the province's finances into line. Where we disagree is about how we go about doing that.

Mr. Speaker, you don't need polling to know that this fire sale of Hydro One is a problem in the province of Ontario, though polls have shown that 81% of Ontarians oppose the sell-off; you just need to get out and talk to people.

Take Legion Branch 74 in Fort Erie, for example. Every Friday, they do a fish fry. It's not a political event; it's just a good community event to bring people together and raise a few bucks for our veterans in the community. Yet when I go there, we have seniors who can't afford their hydro bill. They're coming to me and telling me about choosing between paying for their prescription drugs and medication or paying their hydro bill. Does that honestly sound like something that should happen in a province as rich as Ontario?

Or how about the GM plant, where my brothers and sisters are represented there by Unifor? Their plant manager is Carolyne Watts. This is a company that employs thousands of people in our province, and they actually want to invest more. But when they are looking at investing, they can't be sure what their hydro rates are going to be. They're not sure if they can invest.

Carolyne Watts found me at the United Way Awards Night, when General Motors employees, the CAW and Unifor employees donated over $400,000 to the United Way in that community. She was very clear. Year over year—we're not talking 10 years; we're talking year over year. She said to me, "Gatesy, we have to get hydro rates under control." It went up 20% to the General Motors Glendale facility in Niagara.

During the economic crisis, the Conservatives were very clear about the auto sector: 14,000 jobs—a 33% reduction—and no benefits. This is what would happen.

If you would have listened to the Conservatives during the auto crisis, they were clear: They don't pick winners and losers. What they picked was, they said, "Let the auto industry die." Can you imagine today what it would be like in the province of Ontario—

Mr. Rick Nicholls: We didn't say that.

Mr. Wayne Gates: Yes, you did. You've got a new member from Oshawa and he knows it's accurate. They're very clear on that. They said, "Let the auto industry die. We don't pick winners and losers." That's absolutely what it was. I was at the bargaining table when it was happening. You said it very clearly.

So I can understand that if hydro rates have gone up 20% in the last year, I wouldn't be sure about investing in the province either. Think about it—year after year after year. We've got to make better choices.

Mr. Speaker, I've been lucky enough to hear directly from the member who put this motion forward.

Mr. Rick Nicholls: I think you're going to vote against this.

Mr. Wayne Gates: It would be interesting if they'd just listen.

When I ran in my by-election—I want to be clear about this. I ran in my by-election in the Niagara Falls riding over two years ago. They were happy to go door to door. A lot of those members over there went door to door. And why did they go door to door? I get it: They wanted to get me defeated—I understand that—and talk to the residents.

In my community, we have some of the highest unemployment in the province. We've got some of the most talented and hard-working electricians and trades in the province. I know them well. They're good local workers, yet they can't find work because there are no infrastructure projects being given to local workers. So how do we fix that? We looked at something like the GO train that my colleague on the other side talked about, all the way to Niagara Falls. What would that do for my community? That's important. We know this is an opportunity to create 2,400 full-time jobs in the riding. We also know it will create 1,200 new construction jobs in Niagara. These are huge numbers that would put people back to work by just bringing the train all the way to Niagara Falls.

Listen to this—I know it's hard sometimes to do that. That doesn't say anything about retraining our young people or giving young families an affordable place to live. So when the Conservatives came to my riding, including the MPP—I thought he was here; he was here earlier—from Lambton–Kent–Middlesex, do you know how they wanted to balance the budget?

Hon. James J. Bradley: How?

Mr. Wayne Gates: Anybody? Tell me. You're over here. I'll tell you what: They were going to—

Hon. James J. Bradley: Cut 100,000 jobs?

Mr. Wayne Gates: No, that's down a few extra lines.

They were going to say no to GO. Think about that. When I was at debate—not once, not twice in four months—they said no to GO. That would have cost us the number of jobs we're talking about.

Interjection.

Mr. Wayne Gates: No, they said no to GO.

The Conservative candidate—many, if not every single—

Interjections.

Mr. Wayne Gates: I want you to hear this because I'm not hiding here; I'm telling you exactly. The Conservative candidate, and many, if not every PC MPP in this chamber, went door to door, and they wanted nothing to do with an investment that would create jobs. Do you know what they wanted to do instead? They said we couldn't do GO in Niagara until we balanced the budget. So what they wanted to do was fire 100,000 people across the province of Ontario just to give you—

Interjections.

Mr. Wayne Gates: This is important. I wish you'd listen, really, because this is important to me.

Do you know what that would have meant? To give you an idea what that means in Niagara, that's almost the entire population of my riding that would have been out of work.

That's not all they wanted to do. At the same time, they were promising to lay off the equivalent in my riding—their candidate in Niagara Falls chose, after what we heard yesterday, to attack my firefighters. The candidate called the brave men and women who work so hard in the fire department and went after their collective agreement, went after their arbitration process—clearly a terrible thing; a front-page story, by the way, in the local paper. So there you have it: The PC Party planned to fire 100,000 people and attack my first responders, who, by the way—I want to be clear. I've said it before in this House. Those same first responders saved my wife's life when she was hit by a drunk driver on Lundy's Lane—those same firefighters that you attacked.

Mr. Speaker, we have some of the lowest corporate taxes in North America—think about this—lower even than Alabama, where they have raced to the bottom for years. Huge corporations are making massive profits while the average working man and woman in Niagara is struggling to get by. All we have to do is look at Panama. There's a lot of money out there; it's just not getting to our communities; it's not getting to our province; it's not getting to our country. That's how we were built as a country. Taxes getting cut—payouts being handed out to people at the top. The CEOs are making a lot, yet all the jobs we have been promised just aren't coming.

1730

So the communities got together and they said, "We need a plan to create jobs and bring development here, if the province isn't going to do it." A grassroots campaign—and this is important—came up with bringing GO to Niagara. Now, they've made sure that they have the local politicians onside and they've presented a comprehensive business case.

Frankly, when I first ran against the Liberals, they weren't really interested in either of those. But when I ran in the general election, the Liberals were on board. But the important part about coming on board was that every single politician worked together. It didn't matter whether you're a Conservative or a Liberal or an NDP; it didn't matter if you're a regional councillor or a city councillor. They said, "We need this in Niagara. It's the most important thing we can do to make sure our young people have jobs." So we came together and we put a business case together. What we need now is—there's only one line in the budget—a timeline and the funding to come through for GO.

This motion does talk about something that I absolutely agree with: addressing the mismanagement and waste created by the government. We believe we're in this situation because of a series of bad decisions that have been made.

I only have three minutes left, but let's look at the private-public partnerships, or the P3s, as an example. This isn't Wayne Gates saying this, by the way. The Auditor General proved that this province—

Mr. John Yakabuski: It is Wayne Gates. You're Wayne Gates. Don't you try to fool me. You're Wayne Gate. I know you.

Mr. Wayne Gates: No, but somebody else said it—overpaid $8.2 billion because it chose to use P3s. In my riding of Niagara Falls, we've been working on getting a hospital built; the same hospital this government came to unveil during my by-election, by the way, two years ago. But when we do get it built, I urge this government to make sure it's publicly funded.

I'm going to give you an example of that, because not everybody agrees with me. The member from St. Catharines has a brand new hospital in St. Catharines. I think that it has been open for four years now. But here's what happened with that hospital. They spent $1 billion on that hospital. They closed two other hospitals in my riding—and, actually, they closed Fort Erie and Niagara-on-the-Lake, which ended up being four. But here's what happened when they built it with a P3. Do you know how much it costs to build a 365-bed hospital in St. Catharines? It was $1 billion under a P3 model. For almost the exact same numbers in Peterborough, they got a hospital that was built with publicly—

Hon. Jeff Leal: A great hospital.

Mr. Wayne Gates: Yes, and the minister would know about this. They built a publicly funded—

Hon. Jeff Leal: Yes, I was there.

Mr. Wayne Gates: Please listen on this side. They built a publicly funded, publicly delivered hospital with 335 beds. It was $1 billion for St. Catharines. In Peterborough, do you know what it cost, Minister? Tell me.

Hon. Jeff Leal: We have the economy model in Peterborough.

Mr. Wayne Gates: It was $335 million—$600 million cheaper than a P3. The point that I'm trying to make there is that we could have taken that $700 million that was spent on a P3 hospital in St. Catharines and invested that right back into frontline nurses. We might not have to lay off nurses; we might not have to close as many hospitals. So instead of doing the P3 model, we should seriously look at doing it differently. That's what I think we should be doing.

I have 48 seconds. Mr. Speaker, I want to give a real talk about the hospital in Niagara Falls. Let's get it done, let's get it built, but equally importantly, let's get it built with local engineers, local tradespeople, local businesses and local workers, I guess, but more importantly, local businesses that would supply that. Do you know what that's going to do for Niagara Falls? It's going put our skilled trades back to work instead of working in Ottawa or being laid off. The businesses that are struggling to make ends meet are going to have a project that's going take three to four years. They're going to be able to have employment for their employees, too. It's going to make sure that people have health care in the Niagara region.

Thank you very much for giving me a few minutes of your time.

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

Mrs. Gila Martow: For those of you who have just tuned in at home, I just want to remind everybody that we are here discussing an opposition day motion put forward by the PC caucus. Basically, we're talking today about the nine consecutive budgets that this Liberal government has put forward with huge deficits, the fact that we're now carrying over $300 billion in debt here in Ontario, the fact that we are paying close to $2 billion a year to pay off just the interest on the debt—and we're not even paying down anything on the debt. That is with very low interest rates, I want to remind everybody. What is going to happen to Ontario when those interest rates inevitably rise?

We're hearing from a lot of people today who all expressed concern on Ontario's plans for the future, including the government. What I would say is what we haven't heard very much about today is setting priorities. It doesn't take a person with a university degree, or even a high school degree, to understand that you have to set priorities. What we're seeing from this government is a lack of understanding that, with the over $100 billion they collect in revenue every year, they are still unable to pay the bills on what Ontarians feel are priorities, which are health care, special-needs funding, seniors and education.

Interjection.

Mrs. Gila Martow: I think that if the member opposite had something to say—he's shouting out things right now—there was still time left on the clock for his

party. I'm wondering why he didn't rise and speak to everybody at home if he had something very important to share with everyone.

What I would say is we need to not just prioritize, but understand what has been going on with this Liberal government. What we were seeing in the last week in the newspapers is that it's not just the average workers who go home and pay their taxes who are questioning; people who write for a living and write about politics, specifically about Ontario politics, are questioning this government's motives and wondering at how their decision-making gets done. They are questioning whether contracts are being assigned, whether hospitals are getting built, whether transit is getting built based on their supporters, who support them monetarily for the Liberal fund—

Interjection.

Mrs. Gila Martow: I would say again to the minister, just as I said to the member sitting beside you: If you have something that you wish to share with the people here in the Legislature or our constituents back home, please rise and share it with them. We would all be very interested in hearing what you have to say.

The fact remains that it is suspicious. People who have a lot of experience, decades of experience in watching all levels of government, feel that it is suspicious, and they—

Hon. Jeff Leal: Speaker, come on. Are you listening to what's going on over there?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Stop the clock, please. I'm going to ask the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs to come to order. I don't appreciate the shout-outs to the Chair, and as a result—no?

Hon. Jeff Leal: No, no, I'd appreciate you listening to what's going on.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Well, thank you very much. You're warned. The Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs is warned.

Continue, please.

Mrs. Gila Martow: Thank you very much.

It's my understanding that we're speaking today about an opposition motion that raises concerns about the level of debt in Ontario and the fact that we're paying close to $12 billion a year just in interest payments to service that debt. I am trying to address what can be done to ensure that the money collected, the over $100 billion of revenue collected by the province of Ontario, goes to what everybody in Ontario feels is a priority.

I think that all the members here have their own sets of what they feel are priorities on where that money should go. They were elected to represent the people of Ontario in ensuring that the money goes where the people of Ontario feel it is a priority—not just what we might personally believe, not just what somebody who donates to any of the parties here today or their riding associations believes, but what the people of Ontario, who pay their taxes at all levels of taxation, feel is a priority.

When we hear of nurses being let go, when we hear of special education programs being cut, when we hear of seniors' services being slashed, we all know—it doesn't matter what party we're in—that those priorities are not being met.

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I was visited today by somebody who was recently refused for a Trillium grant that her organization had already received from 2013 to 2015. It was a two-year grant. Her organization received $120,000 to operate Cinéfranco, which is recognized around the world—award-winning francophone cinema projects. Her name is Marcelle Lean. She is very disappointed. She actually paid a visit to members opposite, including the Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport. She said how disappointed she was, and she wanted an explanation, just this last week or so. What she was told was, "Well, we spent a lot of money celebrating Samuel de Champlain, the 400th anniversary, and perhaps you could have tied in and done some funding for that."

She said to me, "Gila, we do not have any French films on Samuel de Champlain. Perhaps we could have recognized that, for Samuel de Champlain, it was about francophones, and we could have somehow tied it in more broadly with franco-cinema."

She feels that the money that was spent on Pan Am—she brought it up to me that she started doing the research on where the money is going.

This is the problem, Mr. Speaker. Until your organization doesn't receive funding; until you go to an emergency room with your ailing parent or child or spouse, and you're left waiting in the waiting room, or you see people in the halls; until you see cuts to the special education schools; until it happens to you, it's hard to really feel the brunt of the punishing cuts that we're seeing. I don't see how it can end unless we prioritize, Mr. Speaker.

The selling of Hydro One: For comparison, picture a family in my riding of Thornhill who own a Tim Hortons franchise. The Tim Hortons franchise is earning the family—perhaps they're getting $70,000 or $100,000 a year from the Tim Hortons franchise. Are they going to sell their Tim Hortons franchise so that they can go on a trip around the world and go on a vacation? Are they going to sell the Tim Hortons franchise to renovate their house for that year? They're not, because they recognize that the next year, they have no funding left. How are they going to survive?

Hydro One is a revenue generator for this province, and we are selling it to pay down the debt. This government likes to say that they're investing in infrastructure somehow, but we all know that it is just to pay down the debt and make their books look a little bit better. What are we going to do when we do not have the revenue from Hydro One once it's sold? We're going to be in far worse shape than we are right now.

I just want to wrap up by saying—it's an expression we hear often, but it's absolutely so true, and it really does apply to this opposition day motion. In order to be socially compassionate, we must be fiscally responsible. That is absolutely the truth, Mr. Speaker. We want, on this side of the House, to ensure that what everyone in

Ontario believes is a priority has the funding that it needs. In order to do that, we must address the fact that we have a debt that is completely out of control.

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

Mr. John Fraser: I want to thank the Minister of Natural Resources for ceding me his time.

I really didn't want to become involved in this debate, because after I read the motion and I listened to the debate, especially coming from the opposition, I was trying to find a word to really symbolize the motion. The word I came up with, Mr. Speaker, is "horse feathers"—horse feathers. In this—

Interjections.

Mr. John Fraser: No, it's horse feathers. Look it up. Google it. Look it up.

We all know in this place that you have to make choices. You can't choose everything. What the Leader of the Opposition has done is say, "I choose everything. I can do everything." It's not possible.

The deputy House leader put it very clearly. When the former leader said, "You know what? I'm ready to say goodbye to all those auto families. We're not going to support them," okay, that's a decision. The member from Windsor West made it very clear that that was a choice that was made. You cannot choose everything, okay? You can't say, "Pay down the deficit, reduce our taxes, and do you know what? Build this hospital in my riding." It doesn't work that way. He needs to pick a lane. They talk about a plan. We have a plan to balance the budget. So in this time when we need a plan, what does the Leader of the Opposition give us? Horse feathers. That's what we're getting.

Remember Bill Davis?

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Stop the clock. Okay, I've put up with quite a lot. I've been extremely lenient today, but the axe is coming down soon. Cut it back, please.

Continue.

Mr. John Fraser: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

I want to reiterate again that at this time, when we have a clear path to balancing the budget and investing in people's priorities, the Leader of the Opposition—what is his plan? Horse feathers. There is no plan. There's, "I can do all of these things. I can be all things to all people." It is not possible.

Bill Davis, 1971 to 1984: He didn't pay down the debt. He ran a deficit all the way through there, because he understood that you cannot cut those things that families depend on. There's a ledger sheet that we have here, and it's an important ledger sheet, but there are also 13 million ledger sheets out there in Ontario, and they are people's personal lives. I hear it from the members of the opposition on both sides when they stand up and speak about people in their ridings, as we all do in here. There are ledger sheets there.

So when you fire 100,000 people or you don't support the auto industry or you say, "Cut taxes," or you say, "Cut this," then you're going to affect people's lives. The danger with that is—this is important. The danger with that is that we don't see all of that. We see that ledger sheet here, but we don't see people's individual lives when we do things like that. That's what the danger is.

I know that members on all sides of this House care about the people that they represent and want the best for them and want them to have services. But don't tell them you can do everything for them, because it's not possible.

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

Mr. Rick Nicholls: We've heard a lot of debate on our opposition day motion, and do you know what? I've been fortunate to be here since 2011. I've yet to see a balanced budget. It will probably be a long time—he talks about horse feathers. It will probably be a long time before pigs can fly, before this happens.

But do you know what? We take a look at deficits and we see that the actual debt load has increased now to well over $300 billion.

I have businesses—I have people coming into my office back in the great riding of Chatham–Kent, and they're in tears because they cannot pay their hydro bills. I look at it and I say: Why is that?

Interjections.

Mr. Rick Nicholls: No, you should listen to that. Why is that? It's because of the mismanagement of this government, the way they've handled their energy plans. You've got wind turbines; you've got everything else all over the place, raising up hydro rates, and people can't pay their bills. You also have companies leaving the country, leaving the province, and that has to stop. You've got to get your act in order.

We had a former member from Newmarket–Aurora, Frank Klees, an amazing MPP. Frank Klees brought up and exposed this government's mismanagement as it pertained to Ornge air and the scandals that were going on with regard to that. That was under the now President of the Treasury Board, the now Deputy Premier, when she was, in fact, the Minister of Health. She allowed that mismanagement to continue on. We talk about scandals, we talk about mismanagement, and when we take a look at what this government is doing, Speaker, it's got to stop.

We listened to the honourable member from St. Catharines. I want to read something here. It's from the Toronto Sun:

"Ontario Liberals Operate in the Dark.

"The Kathleen Wynne/Dalton McGuinty ... government didn't completely mess up Ontario's electricity system by mere accident." Oh, no, no.

"It took years of ignoring advice from its own experts...."

And then "energy consultant Tom Adams and University of Guelph economist Ross McKitrick noted in a report for the Fraser Institute that the Liberal government was unable to produce any convincing evidence to back its claim of saving taxpayers and ratepayers $2 in energy costs for every $1 it invests in conservation.

"All three studies reached the same conclusion—by failing in their due diligence, the Liberals wasted billions of public dollars.

"Something Ontarians"—

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

Mr. Brown has moved opposition day number 2. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I heard a no.

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

All those opposed will say "nay."

I believe the nays have it.

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

The division bells rang from 1751 to 1801.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Members, take your seats.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Order. Are we all ready? Good.

Mr. Brown has moved opposition day number 2. All those in favour of the motion will please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Arnott, Ted	Harris, Michael	Nicholls, Rick
Bailey, Robert	Hillier, Randy	Scott, Laurie
Barrett, Toby	Jones, Sylvia	Smith, Todd
Brown, Patrick	MacLeod, Lisa	Thompson, Lisa M.
Clark, Steve	Martow, Gila	Walker, Bill
Coe, Lorne	McDonell, Jim	Wilson, Jim
Fedeli, Victor	McNaughton, Monte	Yakabuski, John
Hardeman, Ernie	Munro, Julia	Yurek, Jeff

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): All those opposed to the motion will please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Nays

Albanese, Laura	Duguid, Brad	Mauro, Bill
Anderson, Granville	Fife, Catherine	McGarry, Kathryn
Armstrong, Teresa J.	Flynn, Kevin Daniel	McMahon, Eleanor
Baker, Yvan	Fraser, John	McMeekin, Ted
Ballard, Chris	French, Jennifer K.	Meilleur, Madeleine
Berardinetti, Lorenzo	Gates, Wayne	Milczyn, Peter Z.
Bradley, James J.	Gravelle, Michael	Murray, Glen R.
Campbell, Sarah	Gretzky, Lisa	Naidoo-Harris, Indira
Chan, Michael	Hoggarth, Ann	Naqvi, Yasir
Chiarelli, Bob	Hunter, Mitzie	Orazietti, David
Colle, Mike	Jaczek, Helena	Potts, Arthur
Coteau, Michael	Kiwala, Sophie	Qaadri, Shafiq
Crack, Grant	Lalonde, Marie-France	Rinaldi, Lou
Damerla, Dipika	Leal, Jeff	Sandals, Liz
Del Duca, Steven	MacCharles, Tracy	Sergio, Mario
Delaney, Bob	Malhi, Harinder	Sousa, Charles
Dhillon, Vic	Mangat, Amrit	Vernile, Daiene
Dickson, Joe	Martins, Cristina	Wong, Soo
Dong, Han	Matthews, Deborah	Wynne, Kathleen O.

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 24; the nays are 57.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): I declare the motion lost.

Motion negatived.

ROYAL ASSENT

SANCTION ROYALE

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): I beg to inform the House that in the name of Her Majesty the Queen, Her Honour the Lieutenant Governor has been pleased to assent to a certain bill in her office.

The Deputy Clerk (Mr. Todd Decker): The following is the title of the bill to which Her Honour did assent:

An Act to amend the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act, 1997 and the Ministry of Labour Act with respect to posttraumatic stress disorder / Projet de loi 163, Loi modifiant la Loi de 1997 sur la sécurité professionnelle et l'assurance contre les accidents du travail et la Loi sur le ministère du Travail relativement à l'état de stress post-traumatique.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): This House stands adjourned until 9 a.m. tomorrow morning.

The House adjourned at 1805.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO
ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lieutenant Governor / Lieutenante-gouverneure: Hon. / L'hon. Elizabeth Dowdeswell, OC, OOnt.
Speaker / Président: Hon. / L'hon. Dave Levac
Clerk / Greffière: Deborah Deller
Clerks-at-the-Table / Greffiers parlementaires: Todd Decker, Tonia Grannum, Trevor Day, William Short
Sergeant-at-Arms / Sergent d'armes: Dennis Clark

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Albanese, Laura (LIB)	York South–Weston / York-Sud–Weston	
Anderson, Granville (LIB)	Durham	
Armstrong, Teresa J. (NDP)	London–Fanshawe	
Arnott, Ted (PC)	Wellington–Halton Hills	First Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Premier vice-président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée
Bailey, Robert (PC)	Sarnia–Lambton	
Baker, Yvan (LIB)	Etobicoke Centre / Etobicoke-Centre	
Ballard, Chris (LIB)	Newmarket–Aurora	
Barrett, Toby (PC)	Haldimand–Norfolk	
Berardinetti, Lorenzo (LIB)	Scarborough Southwest / Scarborough-Sud-Ouest	
Bisson, Gilles (NDP)	Timmins–James Bay / Timmins–Baie James	
Bradley, Hon. / L'hon. James J. (LIB)	St. Catharines	Chair of Cabinet / Président du Conseil des ministres Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille Deputy Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint du gouvernement
Brown, Patrick (PC)	Simcoe North / Simcoe-Nord	Leader, Official Opposition / Chef de l'opposition officielle
Campbell, Sarah (NDP)	Kenora–Rainy River	
Chan, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Markham–Unionville	Minister of Citizenship, Immigration and International Trade / Ministre des Affaires civiques, de l'Immigration et du Commerce international
Chiarelli, Hon. / L'hon. Bob (LIB)	Ottawa West–Nepean / Ottawa-Ouest–Nepean	Minister of Energy / Ministre de l'Énergie
Clark, Steve (PC)	Leeds–Grenville	Deputy Leader, Official Opposition / Chef adjoint de l'opposition officielle
Coe, Lorne (PC)	Whitby–Oshawa	
Colle, Mike (LIB)	Eglinton–Lawrence	
Coteau, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Don Valley East / Don Valley-Est	Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport / Ministre du Tourisme, de la Culture et du Sport Minister Responsible for Anti-Racism Minister Responsible for the 2015 Pan and Parapan American Games / Ministre responsable des Jeux panaméricains et parapanaméricains de 2015
Crack, Grant (LIB)	Glengarry–Prescott–Russell	
Damerla, Hon. / L'hon. Dipika (LIB)	Mississauga East–Cooksville / Mississauga-Est–Cooksville	Associate Minister of Health and Long-Term Care (Long-Term Care and Wellness) / Ministre associée de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée (Soins de longue durée et Promotion du mieux-être) Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille
Del Duca, Hon. / L'hon. Steven (LIB)	Vaughan	Minister of Transportation / Ministre des Transports
Delaney, Bob (LIB)	Mississauga–Streetsville	
Dhillon, Vic (LIB)	Brampton West / Brampton-Ouest	
Dickson, Joe (LIB)	Ajax–Pickering	
DiNovo, Cheri (NDP)	Parkdale–High Park	
Dong, Han (LIB)	Trinity–Spadina	
Duguid, Hon. / L'hon. Brad (LIB)	Scarborough Centre / Scarborough-Centre	Minister of Economic Development, Employment and Infrastructure / Ministre du Développement économique, de l'Emploi et de l'Infrastructure
Fedeli, Victor (PC)	Nipissing	
Fife, Catherine (NDP)	Kitchener–Waterloo	
Flynn, Hon. / L'hon. Kevin Daniel (LIB)	Oakville	Minister of Labour / Ministre du Travail
Forster, Cindy (NDP)	Welland	
Fraser, John (LIB)	Ottawa South / Ottawa-Sud	

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
French, Jennifer K. (NDP)	Oshawa	
Gates, Wayne (NDP)	Niagara Falls	
Gélinas, France (NDP)	Nickel Belt	
Gravelle, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Thunder Bay–Superior North / Thunder Bay–Superior-Nord	Minister of Northern Development and Mines / Ministre du Développement du Nord et des Mines
Gretzky, Lisa (NDP)	Windsor West / Windsor-Ouest	
Hardeman, Ernie (PC)	Oxford	
Harris, Michael (PC)	Kitchener–Conestoga	
Hatfield, Percy (NDP)	Windsor–Tecumseh	
Hillier, Randy (PC)	Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington	
Hoggarth, Ann (LIB)	Barrie	
Horwath, Andrea (NDP)	Hamilton Centre / Hamilton-Centre	Leader, Recognized Party / Chef de parti reconnu Leader, New Democratic Party of Ontario / Chef du Nouveau parti démocratique de l'Ontario
Hoskins, Hon. / L'hon. Eric (LIB)	St. Paul's	Minister of Health and Long-Term Care / Ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée
Hudak, Tim (PC)	Niagara West–Glanbrook / Niagara-Ouest–Glanbrook	
Hunter, Hon. / L'hon. Mitzie (LIB)	Scarborough–Guildwood	Associate Minister of Finance (Ontario Retirement Pension Plan) / Ministre associée des Finances (Régime de retraite de la province de l'Ontario) Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille
Jaczek, Hon. / L'hon. Helena (LIB)	Oak Ridges–Markham	Minister of Community and Social Services / Ministre des Services sociaux et communautaires
Jones, Sylvia (PC)	Dufferin–Caledon	Deputy Leader, Official Opposition / Chef adjointe de l'opposition officielle
Kiwala, Sophie (LIB)	Kingston and the Islands / Kingston et les Îles	
Kwinter, Monte (LIB)	York Centre / York-Centre	
Lalonde, Marie-France (LIB)	Ottawa–Orléans	
Leal, Hon. / L'hon. Jeff (LIB)	Peterborough	Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs / Ministre de l'Agriculture, de l'Alimentation et des Affaires rurales
Levac, Hon. / L'hon. Dave (LIB)	Brant	Speaker / Président de l'Assemblée législative
MacCharles, Hon. / L'hon. Tracy (LIB)	Pickering–Scarborough East / Pickering–Scarborough-Est	Minister of Children and Youth Services / Ministre des Services à l'enfance et à la jeunesse Minister Responsible for Women's Issues / Ministre déléguée à la Condition féminine
MacLaren, Jack (PC)	Carleton–Mississippi Mills	
MacLeod, Lisa (PC)	Nepean–Carleton	
Malhi, Harinder (LIB)	Brampton–Springdale	
Mangat, Amrit (LIB)	Mississauga–Brampton South / Mississauga–Brampton-Sud	
Mantha, Michael (NDP)	Algoma–Manitoulin	
Martins, Cristina (LIB)	Davenport	
Martow, Gila (PC)	Thornhill	
Matthews, Hon. / L'hon. Deborah (LIB)	London North Centre / London-Centre-Nord	Deputy Premier / Vice-première ministre Minister Responsible for the Poverty Reduction Strategy / Ministre responsable de la Stratégie de réduction de la pauvreté President of the Treasury Board / Présidente du Conseil du Trésor
Mauro, Hon. / L'hon. Bill (LIB)	Thunder Bay–Atikokan	Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry / Ministre des Richesses naturelles et des Forêts
McDonell, Jim (PC)	Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry	
McGarry, Kathryn (LIB)	Cambridge	
McMahon, Eleanor (LIB)	Burlington	
McMeekin, Hon. / L'hon. Ted (LIB)	Ancaster–Dundas–Flamborough–Westdale	Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / Ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement
McNaughton, Monte (PC)	Lambton–Kent–Middlesex	
Meilleur, Hon. / L'hon. Madeleine (LIB)	Ottawa–Vanier	Attorney General / Procureure générale Minister Responsible for Francophone Affairs / Ministre déléguée aux Affaires francophones
Milczyn, Peter Z. (LIB)	Etobicoke–Lakeshore	
Miller, Norm (PC)	Parry Sound–Muskoka	

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Miller, Paul (NDP)	Hamilton East–Stoney Creek / Hamilton-Est–Stoney Creek	Third Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Troisième vice-président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Moridi, Hon. / L'hon. Reza (LIB)	Richmond Hill	Minister of Research and Innovation / Ministre de la Recherche et de l'Innovation Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities / Ministre de la Formation et des Collèges et Universités
Munro, Julia (PC)	York–Simcoe	
Murray, Hon. / L'hon. Glen R. (LIB)	Toronto Centre / Toronto-Centre	Minister of the Environment and Climate Change / Ministre de l'Environnement et de l'Action en matière de changement climatique
Naidoo-Harris, Indira (LIB)	Halton	
Naqvi, Hon. / L'hon. Yasir (LIB)	Ottawa Centre / Ottawa-Centre	Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services / Ministre de la Sécurité communautaire et des Services correctionnels Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire du gouvernement
Natyshak, Taras (NDP)	Essex	
Nicholls, Rick (PC)	Chatham-Kent–Essex	Second Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Deuxième vice-président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Orazietti, Hon. / L'hon. David (LIB)	Sault Ste. Marie	Minister of Government and Consumer Services / Ministre des Services gouvernementaux et des Services aux consommateurs
Pettapiece, Randy (PC)	Perth–Wellington	
Potts, Arthur (LIB)	Beaches–East York	
Qaadri, Shafiq (LIB)	Etobicoke North / Etobicoke-Nord	
Rinaldi, Lou (LIB)	Northumberland–Quinte West	
Sandals, Hon. / L'hon. Liz (LIB)	Guelph	Minister of Education / Ministre de l'Éducation
Sattler, Peggy (NDP)	London West / London-Ouest	
Scott, Laurie (PC)	Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock	Deputy Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjointe de l'opposition officielle
Sergio, Hon. / L'hon. Mario (LIB)	York West / York-Ouest	Minister Responsible for Seniors Affairs Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille
Singh, Jagmeet (NDP)	Bramalea–Gore–Malton	Deputy Leader, Recognized Party / Chef adjoint du gouvernement
Smith, Todd (PC)	Prince Edward–Hastings	
Sousa, Hon. / L'hon. Charles (LIB)	Mississauga South / Mississauga-Sud	Minister of Finance / Ministre des Finances
Tabuns, Peter (NDP)	Toronto–Danforth	
Takhar, Harinder S. (LIB)	Mississauga–Erindale	
Taylor, Monique (NDP)	Hamilton Mountain	
Thibeault, Glenn (LIB)	Sudbury	
Thompson, Lisa M. (PC)	Huron–Bruce	
Vanthof, John (NDP)	Timiskaming–Cochrane	
Vernile, Daiene (LIB)	Kitchener Centre / Kitchener-Centre	
Walker, Bill (PC)	Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound	
Wilson, Jim (PC)	Simcoe–Grey	Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire de l'opposition officielle
Wong, Soo (LIB)	Scarborough–Agincourt	
Wynne, Hon. / L'hon. Kathleen O. (LIB)	Don Valley West / Don Valley-Ouest	Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs / Ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales Premier / Première ministre Leader, Liberal Party of Ontario / Chef du Parti libéral de l'Ontario
Yakabuski, John (PC)	Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke	
Yurek, Jeff (PC)	Elgin–Middlesex–London	
Zimmer, Hon. / L'hon. David (LIB)	Willowdale	Minister of Aboriginal Affairs / Ministre des Affaires autochtones
Vacant	Scarborough–Rouge River	

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Han Dong, Michael Harris
Sophie Kiwala, Arthur Potts
Todd Smith, Monique Taylor
Glenn Thibeault
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Lisa M. Thompson
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Lisa MacLeod, Harinder Malhi
Peter Z. Milczyn, Julia Munro
Lou Rinaldi
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Granville Anderson, Lorne Coe
Vic Dhillon, John Fraser
Marie-France Lalonde, Gila Martow
Kathryn McGarry, Jagmeet Singh
Peter Tabuns
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Katch Koch

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