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Mercredi 29 mai 2013

Speaker
Honourable Dave Levac

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

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ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mercredi 29 mai 2013

The House met at 0900.

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

Prayers.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

ORDER OF BUSINESS

Resuming the debate adjourned on May 28, 2013, on the amendment to the motion to apply a timetable to certain business of the House.

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

Mr. Gilles Bisson: First of all, I'm going to be taking most of my time on this debate this morning in order to raise a number of issues and to go through a couple of things that I think need to be talked about in regard to where we're at.

What's clear is that about a year and a half ago—back in October 2011, I believe the date was—we had an election. The people, during that election said, listen, they didn't want to return a majority government back to this Legislature; in fact they had decided that it was time to have a minority government because they weren't prepared to give (1) a re-election victory to the McGuinty government at the time and (2) they certainly weren't prepared to give a majority government to the Conservatives and were not about to do the same to us. So they decided, in their wisdom—because the public is always infinitely more wise than we give them credit for—that it was going to be a minority Parliament that was going to return to the Legislature for the next little while. They asked—by way of their franchise, by way of the vote—that what we should be doing is trying to figure out how we get together and figure out how we do the work of the people, so that we do what's right for them, not necessarily what's right for the political parties.

We've been here now for about a year and a half, a little bit more than that, and it's been quite an interesting time. You had, first of all, a McGuinty government that came back and said they were into a "major minority." They decided that they were going to strictly try to rule as if they were in a majority and forget what the people had told them. At the time, I remember hearing those comments from the Premier, actually being at some of those scrums. And my comment—as it was with Andrea Horwath and others—was that was wrong, that in the end we should always respect what the people of Ontario have to say, and that the voters are the people who decide

what's to happen here for the next four years or whatever amount of time it is, if it's a minority government. For Mr. McGuinty on the day to say that he was going to act as if there was a majority flew in the face, quite frankly, of what the people of Ontario had asked for in that election.

We spent the better part of a year—a little bit more than a year, maybe a couple of months—working under that scenario, where the government was trying to act as if it was a majority. Andrea Horwath and New Democrats said, "Whoa. Just wait a second here." The people of Ontario didn't give the government a majority. They didn't give any party a majority. They sent us here, and they said, "Be humbled, for a change, and go and do what needs to be done for the people of Ontario."

So we went into the budget cycle last year with that in mind, and Andrea Horwath said, "No, Mr. McGuinty and the Liberals, you're not just going to get what you normally want to get as a majority. You're going to have to take into account what the people of Ontario have to say."

So we went into a budget cycle, and everybody knows what happened through that particular cycle. We amended essentially what was an austerity budget on the part of the McGuinty government and put in place the measures that made the budget more acceptable to the people of Ontario.

Was it a great budget? Absolutely not. There were many components in that budget that we still take offence at: what the government tried to do with the horse racing industry and what the government is trying, or tried, to do with the ONTC, just to name a few. But we managed to put some fairness into that budget.

I think one of the key ones was making sure that it's not always the working class and the working poor who pay all the taxes in this province. That's what we've been seeing over the years. We've been seeing that the top 10% earners in the province of Ontario, as across most of Canada, have been doing better over the last number of years, while the rest, the 90%, are doing worse, when it comes to real income brought home and when it comes to the amount of taxes they have to pay. Those at the top 10% are paying less taxes than they used to 10 years before, and those below—the 90%, the rest of us—are paying more. We said that's patently unfair.

So we put in place what we call the millionaire's tax, which essentially says that anybody over \$500,000 in income would have to pay an extra 2% in income tax. That raised some \$600 million to \$700 million for the province of Ontario that we were then able to put into

home care, that we were then able to put into making sure we had a better health care system, making sure that our kids can go to school and, more importantly, making sure that we don't raise the deficit needlessly in order to make sure we're on track to be able to balance the budget by 2017.

If it hadn't been for New Democrats in the last budget, the fiscal picture today, as far as the Ontario budget, would be that much worse. It was New Democrats who actually tempered the government in what they were doing and, in fact, got some revenue that was very much needed in order to be able to offset the cost of doing business here in Ontario, as far as the services we deliver as an Ontario government and, at the same time, making sure that everybody paid a fairer share of the cost of the services that people get.

I remember, at the time, the Conservative Party said, "Oh my God, the only way you can deal with this is to vote down the government and call an election." That was their mantra back then, as it is now. And the thing that always struck me was that Tim Hudak and the Conservative Party never heard what Ontarians said to them back in October the year before. The people had said, "No, Tim Hudak, you're not going to be our Premier."

Tim Hudak had gone into that election—supposedly was going to become a majority government. What was clear, by the end of the election, after they looked at Tim Hudak a little bit closer, they said, "No, we don't want him as our Premier. What we want, at this point, is a pause so that we can figure out what's going on in Ontario politics," and they returned a minority government to this Legislature.

So I always thought it was rather rich that the Conservatives said last year, "Our only response to absolutely everything is two things: 'No' and 'I want an election.'" Well, what kind of constructive ideas are those? What kind of constructive solutions do they bring to the problems that face Ontarians?

There are some really serious problems that we have to deal with. There was a deficit, at that time, of almost \$17 billion that faced the province of Ontario. We still arguably have a deficit of around \$13 billion today. I think that when we start looking at really how much money the government saved last year with some of this privatization stuff around OLG and others—they've put those into their fiscal forecast—they're going to be quite surprised when they find out how much money they didn't get.

But the point is that the only solution the Tories brought to this was to say, "No, I don't want to play with you. No, I want to do my own thing. No, I believe in the fortunes of the Conservative Party, and all I want to do is get to government." Well, we've seen what a Mike Harris government is all about. We certainly are seeing what a Stephen Harper government is all about. We certainly don't need to learn positive experience from either of those elections. We see Stephen Harper, who campaigned on trust, campaigned on making things more accountable, and we then see people like Mike Duffy, and the Prime

Minister of Canada saying, "Oh, well, I think we've done as much as we can on this."

0910

You know, Tim Hudak's solution to say no to absolutely everything and to say the only thing that Ontarians need is an election is, I would argue, a pretty self-serving ask on the part of the Conservatives. They are clearly demonstrating that all that they want is to be able to do what's right for them and the Conservative Party. I don't believe for a second—I don't care what the polls say; those guys aren't getting elected in a majority government. It ain't happening. I think when the people look at these guys closely as we go into an election, whenever that might be, they are going to find out that the Tim Hudak of the election of 2011 has just gotten meaner and nastier, and quite frankly they are not going to return those guys in any form of a majority government.

We made a decision last year, as New Democrats. We said that we would in fact allow the budget to pass because of those concessions that we got from the Liberal government. We allowed that to pass by essentially abstaining on the vote, because we still believed there were parts of that budget that were problematic—

Mr. John Yakabuski: Gutless.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: —but we had a responsibility to do what's right for the people of Ontario. As I listen to the whip of the Conservative Party call the New Democratic Party gutless, I just say that when people start resorting to those kinds of words and those kinds of allegations, it tells you that they have nothing to defend themselves and quite frankly are being pretty childish and irresponsible about the trust that the people have given them when they come into the Legislature. So I will take no lesson from the whip of the Conservative Party; that is for sure.

We then went through the budget process, and what was interesting in that budget process last year—and I remember well, because I was one of the ones who negotiated this, along with our chief of staff, along with the Liberal House leader and the Liberal chief of staff at the time, Mr. Morley—is that we had said to them, "Be clear; we are still going to amend your budget. And I'll tell you where we're going to amend it. We're going to amend it on the sections that deal with getting rid of wage-based arbitration for workers who don't have the right to strike because they're declared essential workers, such as police officers, such as firefighters and others." We said to the government in those meetings, and my leader Andrea Horwath said to the Premier before we finalized the deal, "You need to be clear. We are supporting your budget motion, but we will still amend your budget and those sections such as I mentioned." And the government said, "That's fine."

We ended up going into the budget process where we were into clause-by-clause for amendments and, lo and behold, the Conservatives became New Democrats in about two seconds. They decided that it was a bad idea to get rid of wage-based arbitration, and I was heartened, because I thought finally the Conservatives were starting to recognize that in a society you need to have rules that

are fair. If you're going to tell police officers and you're going to tell firefighters that they can't go on strike, you just can't take away the right to bargain, and the only right they have in bargaining is wage-based arbitration. I was heartened and I was glad and I couldn't believe it when the Conservatives said to us, "You know what? We're going to support your amendments, because we're going to make sure that the government doesn't pass those particular sections that got rid of wage-based arbitration."

Interjection.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: We'll get back to this in a second, in regard to the motivation of the Tories. But what was interesting was the response by then-finance minister Dwight Duncan. He professed how surprised he was: "Oh, my God. They've gone back on their word."

Mr. John Yakabuski: Point of order.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Point of order, the member for Renfrew.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Standing order 23, Speaker: In his own words, he's assigning motive to another party and members of that party in this chamber. In his own words, he is assigning motive. He should speak to the motive of his own party and himself as a member, but it is out of order to speak to the motive or impute the motive of another party under standing order 23.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Thank you for your input. I believe it's his dime and he's allowed to talk the way he wants for 60 minutes, as long as I feel it's within the guidelines of what he should be talking about. As far as saying what your motive is, that's not really an attack on you; it's simply his interpretation of what he thinks you're thinking and doing. So I don't find that a point of order.

Continue.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I just have to say, Mr. Speaker, I've learned those motives of the Conservative Party over the last year attacking us and attacking others. Anyway, I'll just leave that at that.

My point was that then-Minister of Finance Dwight Duncan said, "Oh, my God, I'm so surprised. Oh, Andrea Horwath and the New Democrats are going back on their word." They played this silly little charade out, and eventually the public understood, I think, because if you looked at what happened afterwards—that we actually went up in the polls at the end of that budget cycle—that in a sense the government was trying to profess that we had broken a deal when we had done no such thing.

What had happened was the Conservatives had decided to play silly buggers in the budget process. Their argument—and I accept this, this was fair—was that gutting of the wage-based arbitration doesn't go far enough. "So because it doesn't go far enough, we're going to support yours to maintain what's in there now." I guess their thinking was that they would then be able to make an argument with AMO and other municipalities that the government would come back with some sort of other deal in the fall to really gut even more seriously the wage-based arbitration for police officers, firefighters

and other emergency workers. The fact that the Tories voted with the New Democrats I thought at first was because finally they were really starting to become the "progressive" part of the Conservatives. I later found out, and I was very disappointed, that in fact they were not being progressive; they just wanted to go further, deeper and harder. I just think that that is the wrong way to go.

And so we ended up passing the budget with those schedules taken out of the act, and then the finance minister, Mr. Duncan at the time, came back and said, "Well, we're just going to come back with legislation. We're going to fix this in the fall. What we've got to do is bring more legislation." At that time we—along with police officers, firefighters, ambulance workers and others who were essential workers—thought, "Whoa, hang on till this fall. It looks like the Tories have got a deal cooked up with the Liberals in order to gut the wage-based arbitration system." So we were waiting for that to happen.

But lo and behold, something happened in between the budget being passed in the spring of last year and what we found as far as the return of the House: There was a by-election. I thought this was rather interesting. The government, who had spent about eight years reaching out to people in the educational sector—teachers and others—decided that it would be to their political advantage in order to attack teachers in the by-election and to essentially say what they did. I thought that, boy, that was really, really bad, in my view, as far as a strategy, because number one, I thought most people would see it for what it was.

This was a case of the Liberals essentially trying to pick on teachers because they were in a by-election for a riding that had been held by Elizabeth Witmer, a member of the Conservative Party. They thought that, "If we go into a Conservative riding and we can show we're better Tories than the Tories who are there now, and we can be more regressive when it comes to teacher bargaining and show that we're tough against workers and teachers and educational workers," somehow or other that would be a good thing, because they would then be able to pick up the right-wing vote in that particular by-election. They would be able to bring back a Liberal, create a majority, and then go on their merry way and finish off with a majority government until whenever that ended. Well, that didn't quite work out the way they planned.

New Democrats found a great candidate in Catherine Fife. We ran an excellent campaign. We pointed out to the voters of Kitchener–Waterloo that in fact what the government was up to was that they were trying to play a Tory game in order to gain for themselves in the election their opportunity to be able to win that seat to win a majority. It was all about the Liberals doing what was right for them and what was politically expedient, not necessarily what the public wanted. Again, I go back to the point of this minority government: The people sent us back as a minority. Why? Because they expect us to work together and to try to find some commonality, understanding that at times we will disagree, which is fair enough. There are times that the Liberals, New Demo-

crats and Tories will disagree in some combination, and that's just fair. That's what happens here, but where we have commonality we should try to find a solution.

So we elected Catherine Fife. She came to this House. She has been a very effective representative for that Kitchener–Waterloo riding. She has been, by leaps and bounds, a real wonderful addition to our caucus with her intellect, her honesty and her approach, being a straight shooter when it comes to dealing with representing the people of that area.

That was also a wake-up call for the government. They recognized that they had a problem. They tried to play the right-wing card in the election game and it had backfired on them. In fact, the people of Kitchener–Waterloo said, “I like Andrea Horwath, I like the NDP and I really like Catherine Fife. I will bring them back to this Legislature in order to hold this government's feet to the fire.”

0920

Well, the response by the government was rather interesting. They came back. They found themselves embroiled in the scandal around the gas plants. It was clear that what the government was telling the people was not lockstep with what actually had happened. I guess that's parliamentary, Speaker. And what—

Interjection.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: What?

Miss Monique Taylor: Bill 115.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Oh, yes, I forgot about that. That's right; I should talk about that before I get to the other one. Thanks for that. That was really helpful.

Miss Monique Taylor: No problem, Brother.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Thank you, Sister.

I'm going to digress for a second because we forget one very important thing: That was Bill 115. The government came back after the by-election and did a time allocation motion with the Tories in order to pass Bill 115, which was the legislation that essentially ripped up the bargaining process for teachers and imposed collective agreements on the teachers, rather than allowing them to negotiate their settlements, as that would be the case later. But what they did at the time is, they imposed those contracts by way of a piece of legislation called Bill 115 that came to this House. They were supported by the Conservatives not only in the bill, but they were also supported in time allocation. We New Democrats were alone to oppose that bill and voted against it.

But then the other part happened, which was the gas plants scandal. The government's only response when they found out the jig was up and that, in fact, they would be in a situation of having to deal with a contempt motion that was in the House was to prorogue. I think that was ill-advised.

I think the fact that the Premier resigned and that they were going to have a leadership race was one thing. That was his call; that was his choice. I respect him for it one way or another. Everybody should be able to make that decision on their own at one point. But they prorogued the House. I argued, at the time, as Andrea Horwath did,

that it didn't make any sense to prorogue the House to allow the Liberals to have a leadership race, because all that was doing was gaming the system for the Liberals.

While the Liberals were having a leadership race, they didn't have to be in the House answering questions at question period and dealing with the issue of contempt that was going through the House at the time. It was an attempt on the part of the Liberals to game the process so that, in fact, they would be in the situation of being able to keep all that pretty well subdued and out of the papers while they went through the leadership process.

I just think that the government and their acting and how they dealt with this minority Parliament in the first year left a lot to be desired, and I will argue it probably still does to an extent. But it was clear that the government was trying to game it for their own interests politically. I think that was wrong.

So here we are. We come back after the leadership race. A new leader of the Liberal Party is elected. She takes her office, and we're into another budget process. We get into this budget process, and Andrea Horwath was quite clear. She said, “Listen, I'm not going to have any negotiations or backroom deals made. I'm going to do this process very transparently. I'm going to do it openly so that the media and the public, through the media, are able to understand what it is that we as New Democrats want and what it is that the Liberals are prepared to do. And I will report at every step what it is that's going on and what it is that we're asking for.”

We put in place six asks. We said we want to have, first of all, a reduction in auto insurance. It is clear that people are being whacked when it comes to the price of auto insurance in this province. If we look at the examples that have been raised in the House yesterday in regard to people getting 15% and 20% increases on the part of their insurance companies—

Miss Monique Taylor: Thirty.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: —and 30%, as I'm told, in another example, that is clearly unacceptable.

The public has come to a point where they can't afford to pay any more. Their wages are not keeping up with inflation, and what they're doing is, they're getting HST added onto them by the Liberal government. The insurance companies are increasing their rates on auto insurance. Cost is going up. The public has had it.

So we have said it's important that we have FSCO change the rules so that, in fact, there is a 15% reduction in auto insurance within a year. We thought that was a fair thing to do, considering that insurance companies had made \$2 billion in profit the previous year because the government had changed the rules to lessen the benefits that the insurance companies have to pay to accident victims, and rather than having that \$2 billion in profit, the government had said they were going to pass those savings on to the public and never did so. We were keeping the government to account to what it is they promised they would do two and three years before. So we asked for a 15% reduction in auto insurance.

We then said, “It's important that we have a youth jobs initiative,” so we asked for the First Start program.

The idea behind that is very simple: There's a lot of youth in all of our communities—it could be Cornwall, Timmins, Thunder Bay, Windsor or Toronto—where people have gone to school, they've gotten their training, but they don't have that first job that is related to what they studied. They can get a job in the service industry, but they can't necessarily easily get the job that they've trained for. We've said we need a First Start program that allows youth to be able to get into an employ where they're actually using the skills they were trained for, and that the employer gets some sort of help in order to make that happen. We put that on the table because we thought it's far better having our youth who have spent time in our post-secondary institutions to be working in the field that they chose than to be working in the service industry or in a job that they quite frankly didn't even go to school for. People should at least be able to get work in what they trained for.

We then said, "We have a problem in long-term care." There is an issue across this province where people are having to wait, to get long-term-care services, for the better part of 200-plus days to get an assessment, to have somebody dispatched to their home to get a bath, to have somebody come in and help them prepare their meals or do nursing services, or whatever it might be. Clearly, when you have that going on, it's a problem that the person who needs to be at home loses their independence, and it's a question that they want to stay at home but are then forced back into an institution at a much higher cost, and it's somewhere that they don't want to be. So we've asked for a five-day guarantee on an assessment, and we've said that would be a fair thing to do. The cost of that was about \$30 million or \$35 million.

We then said, "Listen, it's patently unfair that you've put the HST and charged it to workers and families out there, and at the same time you're going to be giving the richest companies in our province the ability to write off all their HST inputs, starting sometime next year." The cost of that is \$1.3 billion—and again, it goes back to the point that the top 10% of our population are making more money and paying less taxes while the rest of the 90% are making less money and paying more taxes. It's patently unfair. We have said we need to put an end to this. Everybody has to pay their fair share.

I go back to the debate in regard to transit. I listened to the government say, "Oh, the New Democrats, they don't want transit." Horse feathers. Our party has always been a party that supported the issue of proper transit within a city, and intercity transportation between cities like Hamilton and Toronto and others. But it's a question of how to pay for it. It seems to us there's a pretty evident thing here that the government says, "Go and do tolls or increase the HST or increase the price of gas," which is a hit on hard-working people and our economy, or we can say, "Let's just not give the \$1.3-billion tax loophole to these companies that are going to get it in a year's time." There's \$1.3 billion—not too hard to figure out—and then we can make the investment that needs to be made when it comes to transit in cities like Toronto and the corridors between our cities coming into Toronto.

More importantly, there's the ability to provide services such as snowplowing in northern Ontario, making sure that roads are not washed out like we saw last weekend in the Wawa area, making sure that we put in passing lanes where they're necessary, and supporting public infrastructure like the ONTC, the Ontario Northland Transportation Commission, that runs the train in northern Ontario.

We have said those are some of the things that we want in the budget. The government responded over time and gave us pretty well everything we asked for. I was a bit surprised. You know, I've been around for a while, knowing you put forward your ideas, the government responds, you normally get some of them, and then you have a decision: Is it enough?

Well, I give the government some credit: They gave us everything we asked for. Andrea Horwath led; Kathleen Wynne followed. I think that was a very, very good thing for Ontario, and it's not about—

Mr. John Yakabuski: She wrote the budget.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Well, we didn't write the budget, but we certainly inserted the major parts of the budget. The budget was written by the current Minister of Finance and his people, but we inserted—

Mr. John Yakabuski: Andrea was looking over his shoulder.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I love my friend from the Conservative Party, the whip, because—oh, I won't even bother.

0930

Anyway, my point is that we essentially asked for six things, and the government gave them to us. Then we had a decision to make, and that decision was, do we trust that the government will actually deliver? Because I think one place we can agree, my friend from Renfrew-Nipissing-wherever, is that the Liberals have been very good at making announcements. They've been very bad at delivering on those announcements.

I think back to what happened at AMO about a year ago, where they went to AMO and said there was a \$35- or \$40-million capital fund that was being established to assist municipalities to pay for some much-needed infrastructure investments. The criteria to apply were so strict and so difficult, hardly a municipality got any of the money. So it was a great announcement when the Premier, or whoever it was, walked into AMO that year and said, "I've got \$40 million for municipalities." Everybody applauded. God, I had applauded, because we have much-needed infrastructure in our communities that we can use that money for. But the money never got out.

So we said to ourselves, "We need to have, first of all, some transparency on what this government is doing," because we certainly don't want more eHealths. We certainly don't want any more gas plants or chemotherapy or eHealth scandals. We need to have some form of transparency, and I'll come to that in a minute. We need to also make sure there's accountability, so that this government is actually held to account for those things that they say they're going to do.

We asked for three things. We said we want a financial accountability officer, like Kevin Page and the finan-

cial accountability office that is in Ottawa. The problem we have in Ontario is that we have a very good audit process, as far as the auditor, who is able to look at expenditures once they've been done. That auditor and his office, along with our public accounts committee, have done really good work at looking at expenditures once they've happened, and we've learned from some of that and we've learned how to do better. We only hope they would have learned a little bit better when it comes to the gas plants, but I'll get to that later.

The problem we have is that when the government makes an announcement, there's no mechanism in order to say, "Does that make sense? The numbers that the government is using: Is that right?"—in order to be able to make sure that the government and this Legislature are clearer on what the ramification of the decision is and what the costs are, so that we can in fact do it right, if we're going to do it at all.

We decided to do what they had done federally, when Stephen Harper had decided to hold the Liberals accountable because of the Gomery scandal. We all remember the Gomery scandal, where essentially the federal government gave money to their high-priced consultant friends, who then gave money back to the Liberal Party. They decided to put in place what we call the financial accountability officer here, their Parliamentary Budget Officer.

I just would say this as a note: It's a good thing that Kevin Page was there, because if you look at the F-35 scandal, that was going to cost us how much? Some \$35 billion, I think the numbers were. I may be wrong on the numbers.

Hon. Jeff Leal: Just to start—

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Just for starters. The government was claiming it was far less, and Kevin Page came in and said, "Hold it a second. Whoa. This thing has got far more legs on it than you think." In fact, it turned out that the cost was far in excess of what the government was claiming. Essentially, he shone the light on the Harper government, and the Harper government had to back down. That parliamentary officer paid his wages and the wages of every Parliamentary Budget Officer to come for the next 100 years, just with that particular expenditure.

We thought that would make sense in Ontario, because, for example, when the government started this whole thing about cancelling the gas plants, the parliamentary budget officer could have said, "Hang on a second," as Andrea Horwath said in the last election. "There's going to be a mighty big price to pay if you start scrapping contracts in the middle of them, because you're going to have to pay penalties to get out."

The government argued shortly after the election that it was only \$40 million, where in fact it's closer to \$500 million to \$900 million, not only according to what we claim but what the auditor has said and what the government's own documents at cabinet had said. The government said \$40 billion when they knew full well it was between \$500 million and \$900 million.

Well, imagine if we would have had a Kevin Page here in Ontario at the time. That parliamentary budget officer, in our case—

Miss Monique Taylor: We would have had money to pay for transit.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Well, exactly; there's a good point.

We would have been in a situation where they would have been able to shine the light on that, and the government would have known that, when making the decision, and would have said, "Whoa, we can't do this. This is \$500 million to \$900 million." But if they would have made the decision, it would have been in the full light of the numbers, and the public would have known what the costs were, and then the public would have been able to make a better-informed decision in the election about "Do we want a government re-elected that's going to spend \$500 million to \$900 million to save, essentially, a couple of Liberal seats in the Mississaugas?" I would think that maybe the public wouldn't view that as a good idea, which brings me to my first point: Maybe the government wouldn't have done it and would've tried to find some other way to do this to mitigate their losses.

We agree, as New Democrats, that those plants should have never been built in the first place. They certainly shouldn't have been done through the private sector; they should have been built as some sort of public entity. If we would have had a really good process at the beginning that deals with how you deliver public power at cost and so that you're able to site things in a way that makes sense, we would have never had to build it there in the first place. We asked for the financial accountability officer for that very reason.

We also asked for an Ombudsman within the health care sector, something that the government has steadfastly refused to do for the past number of years. We all know the stories. We saw the story in Peterborough where the senior had the camera in the institution, and we saw the bad treatment that that senior got and the pilfering that was going on in his room. That is only one story. We heard the story of the gentleman from London that was raised here in the House by Andrea Horwath a couple of days ago, where he was essentially asked, after he had come in for pneumonia and was very weak and sick and infected, to clean his own toilet at the hospital. He has now gone to the media, I was reading this morning, because the hospital said that wasn't true. He says, "I beg to differ. Darn right it was true." Imagine if the Ombudsman had the ability to take these complaints and to do the investigation.

You know what stops people from doing things that they shouldn't be doing? It's the fear of being caught. That's what the Ombudsman could do in a case like that: ensure that the hospitals and other institutions know that the Ombudsman can investigate. If he can investigate—or she, if it was a woman—as the Ombudsman, then in fact, maybe they wouldn't do those things in the first place.

Then we asked for what is probably something that's going to be one of the better things that we've been able to do in this budget: that the government can't do tolls

and can't do any kind of revenue tools on the big build for transit for the city of Toronto and the GTHA without having a vote in the House. We're saying, as New Democrats, that we believe transit expansion should happen. We believe that Transit City, which the Liberals essentially gutted about four or five years ago—that was the wrong thing to do. Imagine if we had continued with that way back when, we would be further ahead when it comes to transit in this city. But it's a question of how to pay for it. The point New Democrats are making is, you just can't go to the public and say, "It's always you who's going to pay." You need to go to others in our tax system who are making far more money and have them pay their fair share.

You've got the Metrolinx report that came out the other day, and you've got the board of trade of Toronto who say, "Listen, if we don't do this, it's \$6 billion to \$9 billion a year that it's going to cost your economy as a result of gridlock in this city." I agree: That's a bad thing. I agree that we can't have those kind of losses. What I really find appalling is these are the people who represent the top 10%, and they're saying, "We don't want to lose our \$9 billion, but we want you people—the plebes—to pay for it." I just say that's wrong. There's got to be a fairer way of coming at how we're going to pay for this.

Is it really \$2 billion? Because some of this money has already been expended and it's already accounted for for the next number of years. Whatever the final price tag is on an annual basis, how are we going to pay for it? How much of it can come from within? How much of it can come from that top 10% who are making most of the money in this province and paying less back? We need to answer those questions and not just say it's a question of toll lanes on HOVs or taxes that we ask the hard-pressed citizens of this province to pay.

So we asked for those three measures when it comes to accountability. The government gave us, essentially, two and a half of the three. Again, I give them credit; they've given us what we've asked for. I think it shows again that Andrea Horwath knows how to lead, and certainly Madam Wynne knows how to follow. I think that's a really good thing.

Interjection.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Well, Tim Hudak—I was going to come to the point. Mr. Hudak, he's just left behind.

Anyway, I would just say that we got two and a half, which is pretty darn good because the government has agreed—and that's why we're having this debate today—to the financial accountability officer being established in the province of Ontario. I'll come back to this point in a minute.

The government has agreed that there will be a vote in the House on whatever financial tools we use to pay for the big build and the expansion of transit in this city, something that New Democrats believe has to happen. We firmly believe you need to make these investments. It's a question of how we pay for it.

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On the Ombudsman, they've said no, but two things I would say. The government has said, "We will put in

place other mechanisms that allow an easier way to make a complaint at a hospital and knowing that the complaint is followed up on." It's not as much as we asked for. And the other day I heard the Minister of Health say, "You know what? Maybe the idea of giving the Ombudsman the right to do this is not a bad idea, in light of what was exposed in Peterborough the other day."

Again, Andrea Horwath led, and it would appear that Madam Wynne and Madam Matthews are starting to follow, and I think that's a good thing. As usual, Tim Hudak—well, he's just left behind. We'll just leave him over there.

What we've now got is, essentially, a package that has been put forward by New Democrats, which I'm very proud of. I think that Andrea Horwath and New Democrats said, "Listen. We are in a minority Parliament. We need to be constructive in our approach to this minority Parliament. We're not going to get everything that we want, but our job is to be able to do the best that we can, given where we're at and that we have put together what are reasonable asks that don't cost anywhere near the \$1 billion that the Tories are trying to say."

They're trying to argue that these asks are \$1 billion. I would argue that the financial accountability office will pay dividends way in excess of what this budget is, and when it comes to the costs of the six asks that we have, they're nowhere near a billion dollars. I think it's somewhere—the long-term-care ask is \$35 million. The home care is how much again? The home care is nowhere near—the home care is \$35 million. The job creation program is—I forget.

Interjection.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: No, it's not that much. No, that's what the Liberals have done. We'll come back to that.

Interjection.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: It's all costed. It was about \$100 million in total, but the financial accountability office will offset that. Plus, we have said, "Don't give the HST inputs back to the private sector." There you'll save \$1.3 billion if you didn't—

Interjection.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: We didn't leave it out. It was actually one of our asks.

So the point is we have been pretty frugal in our asks. We have looked at the budget. We have said, "What is it that we can do without burdening the taxpayer and making sure that we don't tap out the money that we have?" We've been pretty reasonable and, I think, pretty frugal in our approach to all of this. So I think that was the responsible thing to do, and that's what we've been asked to do by the people of Ontario, which brings me to the programming motion. Now this is all coming together, Speaker.

Mr. Steve Clark: There we go. Icing on the cake.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Icing on the cake it is.

Now we're into the programming motion. The issue that we have, as I said earlier, is that we have these asks that the government has said they would give, and we need to have a mechanism to make sure that they happen.

So we went to the Conservative Party—I know because I’m the House leader for the New Democrats—and I met with my colleague the House leader for the Conservatives, Mr. Wilson, as well as the House leader for the Liberals, Mr. Milloy, and said, “How can we work on this together?”

The Conservatives told us right up front. I said to them, “Listen, I need to pass this budget because we have mechanisms and things in there that are important to the people of Ontario and important to my party, and we need to get the financial accountability office set up. Those are the two things that I want. What do you need included in a programming motion that would make that happen that gives your Conservative caucus and your Conservative base whatever it is that they want?” The response was, “We want an election. That’s all we want.” I said, “Well, you know, we’re not about to vote for that at this point. We’re going to be supporting the budget. So again, what is it that you want in order to come to the table and work something out, as we did last year on a programming motion?” And the Conservatives said, “Listen, we are so mad at the Liberals. We think they’re corrupt and terrible and awful,” and I will agree with you partly. What they did with the gas plants was awful. We’ll deal with that later in this debate. But the Tories said, “The only constructive solution that we have is to have an election, and we are not going to participate in the programming motion.”

Applause.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I hear the applause in the Conservative caucus, and I would ask you to applaud even louder, please. I won’t comment at this point. No, you should do a big applause at this point for yourselves.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Timmins–James Bay is having a lot of conversations with other members. He knows he’s supposed to go through me. No more sidebars. Thank you.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Thank you, Speaker. But it was a great way to get a glass of water.

I say that the Conservatives made a decision, and the decision was to serve the interests of the Conservative Party and to ask for an election, not because they believe one way or another that their solution—you know, essentially what they’re doing is they’re saying, “We’re not interested in making this minority Parliament work; we’re only interested in winning an election so we can be the government.” That’s essentially what they’re saying. So I thought it passing strange yesterday that the Conservative House leader was saying, “Oh, nobody is talking to me. The New Democrats and the Liberals aren’t talking to me.” The first person I went to talk to was Jim Wilson, because I’m in opposition—

Interjections.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Yes. That’s no surprise.

Hon. Jeff Leal: The story is becoming interesting.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Well, it’s no surprise. Everybody knows it. Listen, I’m going to put it on the public record.

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): You seem to be at it again. And the Minister for Rural Affairs, don’t tease him, okay? Don’t bait him.

Continue.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: We asked the Conservative House leader what he wanted to add to a programming motion that would be important to the Conservative base or his members, and he said in response that the only thing that they wanted was to bring this government down, so I said, “Listen, I’m at this point going to talk to the Liberal House leader, because I want to make sure that those things that we want and secured in this budget are actually done. I want to have the financial accountability office and those other measures such as the vote on the transit initiatives and everything done as part of the agreement that we have with the Liberals.”

So I went and sat down with Mr. Milloy, along with my staff and his staff, and we worked out essentially what’s in this programming motion. What’s important is that there is a fair process by which to debate and to deal with Bill 65, which is the budget bill, going into committee. And we have very strongly worded language within this motion that sets out the terms of reference for what the financial accountability office is going to be, how that’s going to be staffed up, how we’re going to choose the FAO and what the powers of the FAO are when it comes to investigation; and equally as important, a mechanism that ensures that when this House returns this fall, or should it return earlier or should it return later, this is going to be done as one of the first orders of business in this House. And we can take great pride as New Democrats for having done that, because it is historic that we create a financial accountability office in this province.

We can take great pride as New Democrats in having made that happen because we decided, unlike the Conservatives, that we’re not just going to go in here and yell and scream at the Liberals and say, “No, no, no,” and stick our fingers in our ears and stomp our feet and say, “We want an election.” We’re actually going to roll up our sleeves and try to get something done, because in the end, that’s what the people sent us here to do. People said, “We expect you to go there to work together, to at times disagree, but don’t forget that we, the public, want you to do some of our work,” and that’s what we have done. Yes, we will be voting for this particular motion, and we will be doing so proudly because it implements those things that we negotiated.

Now to the amendment that is also before us in regard to this particular motion. The Conservatives yesterday got up and introduced an amendment that essentially repeats what they did in the opposition day motion. I just think, again, it’s telling of where the Tories are at and what their motivation is. They’re saying that they want to be able to have a debate and a vote on a non-confidence motion on the gas plants, and I’m saying, as I said in the last debate, that there is going to be due time for that to happen. We currently have a standing committee of this Legislature that has a very good mandate because we, the

opposition—Mr. Wilson and myself—and then Mr. Milloy, as the government House leader, created the terms of reference for the committee on justice to be able to look into this matter. We meet at the call of the Chair. We call the witnesses of our choosing. We decide what it is that we want to look at, either the cost issue or the contempt issue. And that committee is doing its work. In fact, yesterday they had the Minister of Energy at that committee answering questions, because there is a determination that has to be made about a couple of things on this issue.

There's a very serious issue in the first place: that the government decided not to release documents to the committee once it was asked to. You cannot refuse to give the committee documents. So, and rightfully so, Mr. Leone came to the House last year and introduced a contempt motion that said that was a point of privilege, that the rights of the members as a whole were being trampled on by the government. And we supported that motion because we agree with Mr. Leone that in fact what the government did was wrong. But we're still in the process of finding out exactly who made those decisions and how far that web goes. We know that, in the end, it was the Premier who made the decision, but there was a whole bunch of other people involved, and we need to find out who they are, because this House still has to deal with the very serious issue of contempt.

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For example, if there was a vote on a motion of non-confidence and that was to pass, this whole thing would be swept under an election, and I don't think it would serve the purpose of the people of Ontario, because we would never have dealt with who said no to releasing the documents and who obstructed the right of the committee. Those things would die on the order paper as a result of a writ being issued.

As New Democrats, we think there is a committee that is in place to look at these issues and we should allow the process to evolve so that we can get the answers to those questions.

Like Mr. Leone and the Conservative caucus, New Democrats think what the government has done on the gas plants is awful. They spent almost a billion dollars, money that we can ill afford to spend, on saving a couple of seats in the Mississaugas, and I think that is wrong. That never should have happened.

I look at my friends in the city of Toronto who are looking for an investment for public transit. Imagine what we could have done with a billion dollars for transit in the cities of Mississauga, Toronto and Hamilton if we had not spent the billion dollars on the cancellations of those gas plants.

I think it's responsible for us, as New Democrats, to say no to this amendment that the opposition is bringing forward, because the effect of that would be to kill this investigation and we would never find out who said no to that committee.

I can't predict what the result of the next election is going to be. One of these three parties is going to form the next government. I'm not prepared to accept that a

promise now to revive that investigation will actually happen, should there be a new government formed.

We currently have a Parliament that is seized with a committee to deal with this issue, and it's only responsible on our part, in fact, to allow that committee to do its work so that we can find out who said, "Don't release those documents," who was involved in that decision and, more importantly, so that we can deal with that issue of contempt by way of this House once the committee reports back.

There's also the second issue, and that is how much this cost and who made those decisions. What we've managed to negotiate with the government House leader, both the Conservative House leader and myself, is a mechanism that allows us to get at the numbers of how much this cost and who made those decisions. Those may not be issues of contempt, but they're certainly contemptuous to the public. I think the public has the right to know who made those decisions—because I have to believe that it wasn't just the Premier.

I'll tell you a little secret, Speaker. You probably know already. I have served in the last and I'm serving on this election as co-chair of an election for the New Democrats. These kinds of decisions are not just made by the leader. These kinds of decisions, quite frankly, are made by people within the leader's office. In this case, it was the government, the Premier's office. It's made by those people who were on the committee for the re-election of the Liberal Party, and by the co-chairs, which happens to be the current Premier. I do not believe for one second that Kathleen Wynne did not know the cost of the cancellation and was not part of the decision-making around the cancellation.

Interjection.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Well, that's my argument. I agree with Mr. Leone that they absolutely did know. What this committee has to do is determine to what point they knew, so that when we draft our motion of contempt, we're able to effectively deal with that.

As New Democrats, unlike what Mr. Wilson said yesterday, we don't want to send anybody to jail. That's not what this is about. Yesterday I heard Mr. Wilson say, "I don't necessarily want to send Mr. Bentley to jail, but somebody else has to go to jail." Listen, I don't want to send a political staffer to jail for doing what their overseers told them to do. I think what we want to do in this case is to come back to the House, once we find out what the facts are, and based on the facts we then find some kind of reprimand that goes to the issue so that governments in the future don't do this kind of thing.

So yes, we will be voting against your amendment that essentially calls for a vote of non-confidence based on the gas plants because we have yet to determine the answers to the questions we have put at that committee. I say again—and I say this in all sincerity: If there was an election now, that would die, and we would never get to the bottom of who did what and who made those decisions. So I say to my friends in the Conservative Party that it is a stunt. I understand. I understand that the Con-

servatives have nothing to bring to the budget process, and you need to find something to do so that you are seen as doing something here and able to report that you are up to something in the Legislature.

Well, I would argue that it's probably not very useful, but at least you are getting into the media and you are being reported on as being alive with a pulse here in the Legislature. But I'll say again what I said earlier: In this case—what we've seen over the last two budgets—it's been a case of Andrea Horwath leading, the Liberals following and you guys just essentially on the sidelines. And so, I'd just say to my Conservative friends that I look forward to a time when, in fact, you have something constructive to say about how we deal with all of these things.

With that, I'll conclude my comments to say that I'd ask members of the House to vote no to the motion that was put forward by Mr. Wilson—that, in fact, we do support this particular motion, because it will ensure, importantly, that the financial accountability office of Ontario is made and passed into law early this fall, so that the financial accountability officer can in fact do the work that needs to be done, in order to shine a light on this government so that we have more transparency.

I'm sure that at one point there will be an election in this province. If it's not this fall, it will be next spring, and if it's not next spring, it will be some time after that. The people, at that point, will have the chance to make a decision, and I would argue that when people look at the record of New Democrats in this Parliament, they will say, "Who has been the most responsible? Who has been the most pragmatic? And who has remembered what it is that they're here to do?" That was Andrea Horwath and the New Democrats, and I stand proud as a New Democrat behind my leader, Andrea Horwath, for having had the guts, the wisdom and the practicality to roll up her sleeves and to do what needs to be done in this minority Parliament, always remembering that it's not just about us, the politicians; it's about the people who elected us to come here and do the work of the people.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments? Okay; further debate?

Hon. Jeff Leal: It's a pleasure for me to have the opportunity to get a few remarks on the record this morning with regard to the programming motion. I did listen carefully to the very interesting speech, I think, from the House leader from the third party. The member from Timmins–James Bay added an interesting commentary this morning to the programming motion. Of course, we will not be supporting the amendment that was put forward by the House leader of the official opposition yesterday, and that should not surprise anyone.

You know, Mr. Speaker, you get the opportunity to view some of the newspapers from across the province. Just this morning, I had the opportunity to review an article in the Owen Sound Sun Times, a wonderful little newspaper covering things in southwestern Ontario, particularly in the Owen Sound area. The headline today in the Owen Sound Sun Times, by the writer Jim Algie,

is "Wynne's Rural Approach Promising." I just want to quote from the opening of this particular newspaper column. It has a pertinence, I think, to the overall budget and, indeed, the programming motion, because we're talking about moving the budget forward, so I know you'll give me a little bit of latitude just to quote this morning from the Owen Sound Sun Times.

"Ontario Premier Kathleen Wynne is gradually wearing away my initial skepticism about whether she can run the province at the same time as" running the ministry of agriculture and food industry.

"A lifelong urbanite, Wynne has not done a bad job in" agriculture "and food and she seems ... to have survived her first big test running the province. Wynne's strategic instincts and negotiating skills seem to have guided her through the initial hurdles of a crucial budget by wooing third-party support for her Liberal minority government from" the leader of the third party, Ms. Horwath.

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I think that's an interesting commentary. The author of this article talks about the \$100 million that we're putting into rural infrastructure and also talks about the \$30 million that we have proposed in the Local Food Act. This writer, Mr. Algie, is so supportive of what the Premier and Minister of Agriculture and Food is doing, and I recommend all sides pick up today's copy—Wednesday, May 29, 2013, of the Owen Sound Sun Times.

The author of this article is certainly lauding the Premier for great leadership in terms of reviving the horse racing industry in the province of Ontario, and talks about the great Horse Racing Industry Transition Panel, led by former Ontario Progressive Conservative education minister John Snobelen—Mr. Snobelen of course is well recognized in the horse racing industry across Ontario—and my friend from Peterborough riding, the former Minister of Agriculture from 1990 to 1995, Elmer Buchanan. Mr. Buchanan lives just north of Havelock, Ontario. I get a chance to see Elmer fairly frequently. He and his partner, Lee, raise alpacas. They take the wool from alpacas and use it for a variety of sources. I know the member from Timmins–James Bay was a former very close friend of Elmer Buchanan. The third member of that very distinguished trinity is John Wilkinson, a former Minister of the Environment in the province of Ontario, a former member from Perth–Wellington and a guy we know always had a very keen interest in horse racing. That new trinity, that amazing trinity of Snobelen, Buchanan and Wilkinson, is doing an outstanding job to revive the horse racing industry in the province of Ontario.

I know my friend from Oxford was a very close friend of Minister Snobelen. They were close colleagues when they served together in cabinet. I know how supportive the member from Oxford is of his former cabinet colleague Minister Snobelen in his—well, he's shaking his head here. I'm going to give John a call later this morning. I always thought the member from Oxford and Minister Snobelen were very close friends, that they

would see eye to eye on a lot of issues. But, gosh, I'll get John's phone number.

We would like to express our deepest condolences to Mr. Snobelen. His mother just recently passed away, and I know all of us offer our deepest condolences and sympathy to the Snobelen family. I understand she was quite a lady and really a fine person. We wanted to get that on the record.

I have a few other interesting points I want to make today. When we look at what's been debated in this House, we have Bill 11, the air ambulance act, which was debated for 19 hours and 14 minutes before it was referred to committee. Our good friend Harvey Cooper—you know, Harvey has kind of aged right in front of our eyes, he's been waiting so long for Bill 14, the co-op housing act. We admire his perseverance. We debated that one 15 hours and 50 minutes. And Bill 36, the Local Food Act: 20 hours and 35 minutes.

Just this last Saturday I took my son Braden—Braden is 15, in grade 9 at Holy Cross high school in Peterborough, a great kid, a former page here. He and I went to the Ontario Food Terminal—the first time that Braden had been there—and it was a great Saturday morning to see what goes on at the Ontario Food Terminal, all the activity there. Their message to me was, "Why can't we get this Local Food Act passed?" I said to the folks there, "Well, we have to have some patience, but I know we're going to get this bill through. I know the official opposition has some good ideas for amendments; the third party has some good ideas for amendments." Let's get this bill moving forward, because the folks at the Ontario Food Terminal want to get this passed. I think that's very important.

It's good to see my friend the member from Durham is going back to his seat. Let me say, this past weekend in Peterborough was the 74th edition of the Catholic parents' conference, held in Peterborough. Karan and I had a delightful experience on Saturday night to be sitting with the spouse of the member from Durham, Peggy O'Toole. She's a trustee with the Peterborough Victoria Northumberland and Clarington Catholic District School Board, and of course the question that we all asked—we were there with Mayor Bennett and his wife—was, where was John? We do know that if the member from Durham had been there for Durham, he would have added an interesting commentary at our dinner discussion on education. We really missed John last Saturday night, but Peg did a great job. It was a delightful dinner. In fact, one of the things that we discussed was—the member from Durham's son Erin is now an MP in Ottawa, so we talked about the family transition that goes on, particularly when you have a young family and you go to Ottawa, and what that means for a family and how they can adjust.

Mr. Speaker, I just wanted to digress on that for a moment. I will get back to the programming motion here.

We look forward to a vote later this morning. We certainly look forward to getting some things through on this. There are some time-sensitive areas.

I know that the Peterborough poverty reduction committee is particularly interested that we're going to in-

crease the Ontario Child Benefit to \$1,210 on July 1, 2013. That's an interesting program. The late June Callwood, when she provided some commentary on the Ontario Child Benefit, said it was the most progressive initiative in Ontario in the last four decades. I think that says it all, because we do know the late June Callwood and her reputation in bringing about fairness for people who have challenges in the province of Ontario.

Also, the member from Beaches–East York has been a real leader in this area of providing choice of payment—monthly or annual—for the Ontario Trillium Benefit program. That's something I know seniors in Peterborough are very concerned about, so I'd like to give some credit to the member from Beaches–East York.

Of course, Mr. Speaker, we can all take that 15% reduction in auto insurance. I know everybody will welcome that: a few more dollars in the pockets of the hard-working men and women across the province of Ontario.

I know what is particularly important to AMO and the municipalities is the dedicated two cents of gas tax each year for public transportation.

The other thing that I'm so supportive of: I do like the financial accountability officer. I just want to follow up on what the member from Timmins–James Bay said during his remarks.

We have a very strong system in Ontario. We have the public accounts committee, and we do have the Auditor General, but that's always at the tail end of government programs. The financial accountability officer, of course, will be at the front end, and we welcome the legislation that will be introduced this fall. I think it will provide, overall, an increased amount of accountability for taxpayers' dollars in the province of Ontario. We certainly welcome that. I think it's a good initiative. On this side, we'll certainly be supporting that particular initiative.

Mr. Speaker, we look forward to all these amazing initiatives that we have in the budget. Look, this is a budget for all Ontarians. It's not a budget from the official opposition. It's not a budget from the third party. It's not a budget from the government. This budget has been the collective consensus of all Ontarians. You've been reaching out, Mr. Speaker, we've been reaching out, and the third party has been reaching out. We've all been reaching out to come out with good ideas.

One of the good ideas I really like in the budget, and we got it from the federal finance minister, the very Honourable Jim Flaherty, is that capital acceleration allowance. When I talk to GE in Peterborough, when I talk to Siemens, and when I talk to Quaker Oats, they see this as a very important aspect for reinvestment into their capital and their machinery. We want to make sure that we get that in place. It will go to the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs—an opportunity to look further into the budget component parts.

We welcome in Peterborough the investment in youth employment. We do know, when we look at the statistics of youth employment, that we certainly need some investment in that area, and we're prepared to do that. We want to make sure that the next generation can get access

to those jobs and make a contribution to the overall being in the province of Ontario.

The other thing that is very important is our investment in home care. I know, Mr. Speaker, you're getting calls in your constituency in Hamilton. I know how Ontarians, particularly our seniors, will like the investment into home care. I know the minister for seniors—he's not with us this morning—has been a very strong advocate of that particular initiative.

We're all concerned about deficit reduction to \$9.8 billion, the fourth year in a row that—I think we're the only government in Canada that consistently hits our fiscal targets. I believe we're on track to certainly meeting our target for the next fiscal year, and we look forward to that.

We're controlling our spending while not raising revenues, we've brought in tax reforms that work, and of course we're looking at ways to keep the economy going forward, particularly in a great riding like Chatham-Kent-Essex.

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I think the member there should get that changed to Chatham-Kent-Leamington to actually reflect that area. I've spent some time in Leamington, a wonderful community. H.J. Heinz, of course, is a major player in that community in the food processing industry. Food processing: \$34 billion across Ontario.

I learned something interesting when I visited the Food Terminal last Saturday: The ketchup that they make in Leamington is unique for the Canadian market because Canadian consumers like ketchup that's sweeter, and it's only produced in Leamington, Ontario. If you get the chance to go to the Ontario Food Terminal you'll learn something new each and every day.

We look forward to getting the budget motion passed. There will be a vote a little later this morning—

Mr. John Yakabuski: You need a sweet ketchup to be able to swallow what you guys are peddling.

Hon. Jeff Leal: I hear from my good friend from Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke, a great guy—I know that even in Barry's Bay they like Heinz ketchup that's sweeter than the American variety, and I think that's a good thing.

So we will continue. The budget bill has already had 11 hours of debate, and the programming motion is going to provide a very responsible framework over the next number of days to get this through, and then the budget bill will be passed. We look forward to continuing to consult with ordinary Ontarians, those hard-working men and women who do such a great job every day.

I know the good folks in Alexandria are happy about this budget and the investment in home care and youth unemployment—but particularly when you remember that through the downloading exercise of 1998-99, 43% of all the roads and bridges were downloaded in eastern Ontario. I know my friend, the member there who came from municipal politics—every day they're trying to look at that inventory. They look at that big albatross that was put around their neck in eastern Ontario, and they're looking for ways to get rid of that inventory.

So part of our investment, that \$100 million for roads and bridges—I know the folks in Alexandria are excited. I'm sorry, Speaker, I get a little excited—

Mr. Grant Crack: Glengarry-Prescott-Russell.

Hon. Jeff Leal: —when it comes to Glengarry Prescott; there we go.

I know I get a little excited when I talk about roads and bridges, which are the backbone of many rural communities, particularly in eastern Ontario where they had to bear that burden of 43% of all those roads and bridges that were downloaded in eastern Ontario. Under the leadership of my friend from Glengarry-Prescott-Russell, we're making progress to get rid of that inventory.

Also a good thing in eastern Ontario is the broadband connection, which is the highway of the 21st century. We look forward, like communities like Barry's Bay and those kinds of communities, to taking advantage of that highway of the 21st century that will allow for business development and allow for e-education to take place, which I think is extremely important in eastern Ontario.

I know my friend from Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke is very excited about that broadband connectivity, that highway for the 21st century, because I know he would like to be seen, like Sir John A. Macdonald who is the father of the transcontinental railroad, and to be part of that railroad of the 21st century. I know he's extremely excited about that, and we look forward to getting out and about in Barry's Bay to celebrate these kinds of great initiatives.

I'm also looking to get back to Athens one of these days. I particularly like Athens in the great riding of Leeds-Grenville. I had the opportunity to be there on a couple of occasions and I know the hospitality of the former member of Leeds-Grenville, now a senator. In fact, Senator Runciman paid me a phone call last week, and I was really excited about that. My staff phoned and said someone was holding from the Senate of Canada. I said, "Who would be calling me from the Senate of Canada? I hope it's not Mike Duffy." It wasn't Mike Duffy. I picked up the phone and it was Bob Runciman.

Let me say it's always a delight to speak to Mr. Runciman, one of the most distinguished members ever to serve in this body. Senator Runciman and I had a great conversation about horse racing; he, of course, is very interested in horse racing and he certainly—well, I won't get into all the details of the conversation—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): I thank the member from Peterborough.

Debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Since it is now 10:15, this House stands recessed until 10:30 this morning.

The House recessed from 1015 to 1030.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette: I'd ask all members to join me in welcoming the deputy mayor from the city of Oshawa, Mr. Roger Bouma.

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: Today's page captain is Jack Mogus, and sitting in the members' gallery today are Jack's mother, Janet, his sisters Julia and Emma, and his grandmother Maria Matias. Please welcome them to Queen's Park.

Mr. Michael Harris: I would like to welcome Tim Patriquin and Jason Donville to question period today. We hope you enjoy your visit as guests of John O'Toole and myself. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Hon. John Gerretsen: Speaker, I wonder if you could help me welcome three interns who are working in our office at the Ministry of the Attorney General this summer. They're all budding law students: Brooke Auld, Colin Campbell and Kevin Leung, who are here in the members' gallery. Yes, we have three of them—great people.

Mr. Bill Walker: It's my pleasure to introduce Matthew Lawford. He's from Toronto, the grandson of Gillian Lawford, who's a great resident from Markdale in the great riding of Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Hon. Michael Chan: I want to welcome Amy Padro, manager of government relations, from Parachute Canada. She and her organization are here today to celebrate Safe Kids Week.

Mr. Jack MacLaren: I'd like to introduce a good friend of mine, Graham Clow, an old Queen's University friend of mine. Stand up, Graham. Graham is a special person because his son Brian works for the Liberal Party back here and steers the Liberal ship.

Hon. Ted McMeekin: It gives me great pleasure to introduce Laura Lee Walter, the mother of Jakob Walter, who's a page for that great riding of Ancaster-Dundas-Flamborough-Westdale. Welcome.

Mr. Rob E. Milligan: It gives me great pleasure today to introduce my cousin Steve Donaldson, his lovely wife, Rhonda, their daughter Lara and their son Adam to Queen's Park.

As well, I have two constituents from the riding of Northumberland-Quinte West: Lori Caughey and Cara Owens. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mrs. Laura Albanese: I would like to welcome to Queen's Park Mr. Marek Goldyn, CEO of the European Club of Toronto, and Mr. Bob Ristić from the Serbian Television Toronto. They're here for the European flag-raising, which will take place on the front lawn of Queen's Park right after question period. Welcome.

Mrs. Christine Elliott: It's my pleasure to introduce my guests today: Richard Foreman, Lorraine Wilson-Munro, Kenneth Foreman and Pat Foreman, who are here to observe question period and to have a tour of Queen's Park. Welcome.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: I'm pleased to introduce and welcome some friends in the members' west gallery, from CUPE Local 82 in Windsor: President Jim Wood, Vice-President Chad Goebel, Treasurer John Grima, Secretary Mike Preston and Membership Officer Jeff St. Pierre, who are here with CUPE Ontario celebrating 50 years of representation for public employees in Ontario.

Hon. Charles Sousa: It gives me great pleasure to introduce some very outstanding young individuals who are interns in the Ministry of Finance. In the members' gallery: Neville Britto, Sahar Ziaey, Erich Schmidt and Blair Ostrom. Welcome.

Mr. Rick Nicholls: It gives me great pleasure to introduce a friend of my wife and I as well as the soulmate of my colleague Mr. MacLaren: his precious wife, Janet, is here with us today.

Miss Monique Taylor: It gives me great pride and honour to introduce my father and his wife, Mike Taylor and Pauline Taylor.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I could give you a cheap shot, but I'm not going to.

Hon. John Milloy: It gives me pleasure to introduce Graham Clow from Toronto, who is with us this morning. His son Brian works here at Queen's Park. We're very pleased to welcome him.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: I have a number of guests here from the city of Ottawa today. They are not yet in the members' gallery, but they will be arriving: Guy Boone, Hubert Mamba, Dr. Ray Barton and Jeannette Chau. They're all from the city of Ottawa, and they're all professional engineers.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: It gives me great pleasure today to introduce, in the visitors' gallery, Dr. Azhar Masood. Dr. Masood's daughter, Hooriya Masood, is our page, and they just live a few blocks away.

Quite extraordinarily, Dr. Masood is a research fellow, a PhD, in lung biology and works at SickKids Hospital. We're having a little battle. I'm hoping his daughter is a future MPP for Toronto Centre, and he's determined, I think, to convince her to become a physician. Welcome.

Mr. Jim McDonell: I'd like to introduce Gillian Lawford, who I understand is a keen hockey fan and will be picking for the Detroit Red Wings tonight in a key game.

M^{me} France Gélinas: We have a large delegation of people coming from Kingston that are just going through security right now. This is Dan Anderson, Angie Bacon, Imaan Bayoumi, Marilynn Birmingham, Barb Deroche, Bonnie Ferguson, Mary Forbes, Mathew Gventer, Jean Gower, Janet Heyman, Dianna Inkster, Kyle Jones, Pauline Kulhman, Graham Lodge, Richard McNeil, Norah Parish, Tom Pinero, John Platt, Harold Pickering, Aimee Van Vlack, Ross Sutherland; Natalie Mehra, from the Ontario Health Coalition; Monica Lonergan, Elanor Beach, Donna Ferguson, Amina Buchanan, Linda Forster, Chris Kingston, Sheri Robinson, Robert Kylie, Phil Trotter and Sandra Willard. Welcome to Queen's Park.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): We have with us today in the Speaker's gallery a delegation led by the Speaker of the Parliament of the Hellenic Republic, His Excellency Evangelios Meimarakis. He is accompanied today by the ambassador of the Hellenic Republic to Canada, His Excellency Eleftherios Anghelopoulos. Welcome to our assembly House here today.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Yes, we will be having question period. It is now time for question period.

ORAL QUESTIONS

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Simcoe–Grey on a point of order.

Mr. Jim Wilson: Mr. Speaker, we would like to stand down our lead questions at this time.

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

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Just on a point of order: We will be doing the same until the Premier arrives.

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

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): It's not that confusing.

GOVERNMENT SPENDING

Mr. Frank Klees: My question is to the Minister of Finance. Yesterday, we offered to participate in an all-party select committee to assist the government in finding \$2 billion of savings across all ministries. We did that because we outright reject the concept that there should be \$2 billion of additional taxation on families and businesses in this province. The New Democrats reject that as well, and we know today that the vast majority of Ontarians reject that.

I'd like to know from the Minister of Finance: Will he agree to accept our offer to form an all-party select committee to assist him in finding the savings and efficiencies of \$2 billion across the ministries?

1040

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Minister of Finance?

Ms. Sylvia Jones: We want to start a conversation.

Hon. Charles Sousa: You know what? Let us start a conversation. Let us agree—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I'm going to start a conversation. The interjections will stop.

Minister.

Hon. Charles Sousa: Let us agree to do this: Let us agree to pass the budget that talks about a very disciplined and determined measure to curb our spending. We're taking the steps necessary to ensure that spending remains below 1% year over year. As a result of those initiatives, we've been able to achieve over \$5 billion in cuts over the last year to reduce our deficit projections. Next year's projection is going down by another \$1 billion again because of those measures that we've taken. That is what is important.

We need to ensure that, going forward, we work collaboratively by passing this budget, ensuring that these proper steps are taken so that we tackle and eliminate the deficit by 2017-18.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Frank Klees: The New Democrats have already confirmed that they'll pass the budget. We're going to vote against it because we do not believe that to increase spending by \$2 billion is a good start towards reducing spending and waste.

Here's what I'm asking the Minister of Finance: Apart from the budget, which is a separate issue, we all know that there are at least billions of dollars of waste in this government every year. We, as the official opposition, want to extend our offer of support to form an all-party select committee to help find that waste so that we don't have to put \$2 billion of additional taxes onto the backs of families and businesses across this province. Will he accept that?

Interjections.

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

Hon. Charles Sousa: We have taken extraordinary steps to transform the way government works, to find those savings to ensure that we're delivering services in health care and education and all the other ministries that have taken extraordinary steps to reduce their spending. But we know that in health care and education there are still pressures that are necessary because of the increasing demands.

What is necessary as well is to be balanced in our approach. What is necessary is to stimulate economic growth and economic renewal by stimulating jobs and investments in our capital infrastructures. What is not necessary and what is harmful for economic renewal is a slash-and-burn policy, across-the-board cuts, attacks on our nurses on our front lines. This is what they're offering. We're not going to stand for that.

We're going to invest in our future; we're going to invest in our young people. We're going to create jobs and stimulate growth. That's what this budget is about.

ACCESS TO INFORMATION

Mr. Peter Tabuns: My question is to the Minister of Energy. New Democrats FOIed everything from the Premier's office which included the words "Project Vapour." We were told nothing existed. In the process, we received a sworn affidavit. It said that the Premier's chief of staff, Chris Morley, had his email account deleted on June 21, 2012; Jamison Steeve, the principal secretary, had his email account deleted on August 17, 2012; and Sean Mullin, the Premier's energy adviser, had his email account deleted on August 17, 2012. Then we learned in committee that the energy minister's chief of staff was deleting all his emails.

Yesterday, Ontario's information commissioner said, "It strained credulity that no one thought maybe they should retain some of the emails...."

Can the minister explain why senior Liberal political staff involved in the gas plants were deleting all their emails?

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: Government House leader.

Hon. John Milloy: I'd like to point out to the House that the honourable member, in his question, forgot to point out that there were around 30,000 documents—many of them from the Premier's office—that were recently delivered to the committee.

In terms of the specific issues he raises, he is correct. My understanding is that the Information and Privacy

Commissioner is looking into the matter, and we await her report.

At the same time, I can say, as the Minister of Government Services, that we take our obligation to retain relevant records very seriously. Training opportunities have been available for political staff as we enter into this new government phase, and we're certainly making efforts to make sure that the rules and regulations are being followed.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Minister, New Democrats have asked the information commissioner to investigate. Your comment there is correct.

In documents filed with the Information and Privacy Commissioner, the government tried to stop the commissioner from looking at this. The government wrote, "the ... allegations about the destruction of records ... are not matters that may be appealed to the commissioner." That response came March 5, 2013, long after this current Premier was sworn in.

Why did the government, under this current Premier—not the previous one—continue to try and hide the destruction of documents and stop the information commissioner from getting information?

Hon. John Milloy: Mr. Speaker, we have turned over 130,000 documents to the justice committee, including, as I just referenced, 30,000 from the Premier's office.

In terms of the specific cases that the member raises, the committee itself has a mandate to look at the issue of documents and can pursue this matter. The Information and Privacy Commissioner is looking into it, and we await her report.

As I said, we take this matter very, very seriously, the retention of documents at the political staff level. Training courses are under way, and I know ministers' offices have regimes in place to make sure that the rules are followed.

CHILDREN'S HEALTH SERVICES

Mr. Phil McNeely: My question is for the Minister of Children and Youth Services. Minister, in my riding of Ottawa—Orléans, I often meet with families and listen to their concerns, like all members here.

One concern that I frequently hear from parents is that they want to know that the right services and supports are in place for their child's development. This is a universal concern, and as a grandparent myself, I know that these types of services make positive impacts on the lives of our children. I know that in Ontario we are providing some of the best supports available anywhere in the world.

My question: Can the minister please tell me what we are doing as a government to help children grow up to be healthy teenagers and then healthy adults?

Hon. Teresa Piruzza: I'd like to thank the member from Ottawa—Orléans for his question. As he indicated, as a parent myself, nothing is more important to me than making sure all children are well prepared for life.

Our ministry is investing \$261 million annually in a myriad of programs for healthy child development. These supports include our early years centres, preschool speech and language programs and Healthy Babies, Healthy Children. Healthy Babies, Healthy Children supports vulnerable mothers from the prenatal period through their child's transition to school.

Through programs like this, we're able to directly assist in the healthy development of all young people. We remain committed to providing children with the best possible start in life.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Phil McNeely: I would like to thank the minister for her answer. It is very clear to me that this government takes the responsibility of healthy childhood development seriously and is making a significant investment.

However, this is an area where there is always an opportunity to make improvements. As a government, we need to be constantly looking to improve the services we provide while also seeking out new and improved methods. I understand that in March of this year, a Healthy Kids Panel released a report with recommendations to improve healthy childhood development, specifically with the goal of reducing childhood obesity. I'm pleased our government established this panel to help combat such an important issue.

Can the minister please tell the House more about the report and how our government is responding?

Hon. Teresa Piruzza: I'd like to take this opportunity to thank the Healthy Kids Panel for their report, which aims to improve the health and well-being of children in our province. The report made recommendations on a number of vital Ministry of Children and Youth Services programs. These include the Poverty Reduction Strategy, student nutrition, and mental health and addictions.

We are committed to reviewing the recommendations in order to inform our future direction. Minister Matthews and I will be co-chairing a working group on the Healthy Kids Panel report. This working group will be essential in the effort to move towards this government's goal to improve early childhood development services. We will continue to work with our partners and stakeholders in our commitment to improve the health and well-being of every child in Ontario.

CORRECTIONAL FACILITIES

Mr. Jeff Yurek: My question is for the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services. Minister, you have grossly mismanaged our jail systems in Ontario. You've closed jails in Walkerton, Owen Sound and Bluewater without enough capacity to safely absorb the inmates. Rather than fixing problem jails, you close them.

1050

Given your track record, people in my area think you have no interest in actually fixing the problems at EMDC. Many think you'll ignore the problems until you can officially close the jail. Minister, when do you intend to close the Elgin-Middlesex Detention Centre?

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: First of all, Mr. Speaker, let me thank all the correctional officers and the staff at the EMDC. They are doing an extremely good job. It's not an easy job to do, and I wanted to thank them for all the good work that they're doing.

As you know, Mr. Speaker, and as I said yesterday, the Elgin—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Order.

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: —our staff in our correctional facilities, in EMDC, is my utmost priority. I know that they are always working in a very challenging environment.

Actually, one of my first visits when I was appointed Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services was at EMDC. I met the leadership there, I met representatives from the correctional officers and I saw first-hand the good work they are doing over there.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Jeff Yurek: Back to the minister: Minister, as you know, the situation in the Elgin-Middlesex Detention Centre came to a head last night. Correctional officers, insulted by your comments, locked down the jail. Two fires broke out; a green alert occurred, of which there have only been two in the past 22 years, and it was issued; and a number of inmates were reportedly sent to the hospital.

The correctional officers at EMDC work day in and day out in dangerous conditions—conditions made worse by your mismanagement. Yet yesterday you refused to take responsibility and instead threw our front-line corrections officers under the bus and insulted all the managers around the province.

There's absolutely no excuse for your failure on this file. Minister, will you admit you have no credibility on this file, publicly apologize and resign?

Interjections.

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

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): This is not the moment to add your interjections.

Minister?

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: Mr. Speaker, as I said yesterday, the health and safety of the correctional officers and the staff at EMDC is my utmost priority. And if I offended someone yesterday, I deeply apologize, because that was not my intent.

Since I was appointed with the responsibility of correctional services, I've worked very closely with my ministry, with our partners out there, with the union. Actually, I'm meeting the union this afternoon and the executive of EMDC, because I want to hear first-hand what their concern is and I want us to work together to improve the situation at EMDC. I want to see a real difference in EMDC.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock. To put us back on rotation what I'll do is, I'll go to the NDP for the two-question part and then come back to the

leader for the primary questions, and then I'll come back to the leader of the third party for the primary questions.

The member from London—Fanshawe.

CORRECTIONAL FACILITIES

ÉTABLISSEMENTS CORRECTIONNELS

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: My question is to the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services. Yesterday there was yet another emergency at EMDC: A second fire in less than a month broke out and three inmates have been injured. Instead of working to address the persistent problems at this jail, the minister chose to blame the workers.

For years, workers have brought up time and time again the problems at this facility. My leader, myself and other members in this House have brought this to her attention. Minister, you have chosen to blame the workers who have done everything in their power to keep the jail functioning. Will the minister apologize to the workers for her thoughtless comments?

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the member from London—Fanshawe. I know she has a keen interest in improving the situation there, and I have asked her to give me some names of people who will be good candidates to sit on the new board that I want to appoint to improve the situation there.

As I said, I'm meeting with the executive of the jail this afternoon, and I want to continue this relationship to improve the situation out there.

Again, if I have upset, if I have insulted, it was not my intent, and I deeply apologize.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: Mr. Speaker, workers at EMDC have been raising issues about the safety of this jail for years. But little has changed, and the jail continues to be severely overcrowded and is a highly dangerous environment for workers and inmates alike. The minister's lack of action places the staff and inmates of EMDC in conditions she herself would not want to work in.

I ask again, Mr. Speaker, will the minister apologize to the workers of EMDC and finally take action today to improve the conditions? I'm not asking for an apology; I'm asking for the words "I am sorry."

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: I'm going to say it in French, too, because I've said it twice before. Alors, si j'ai offensé quelqu'un, je m'en excuse. Ce n'était pas mon intention parce que je sais combien difficile est leur travail, et ils travaillent très, très fort.

But I wanted to say that we are working on advancing our plan, so we are hiring 11 new full-time correctional officers. We implemented 24-hour nursing in March, and we added, in January, a mental health nurse. We've hired three more operational managers, and we're building new control models. Also, the correctional officers now can wear safety vests; they have this opportunity now. Their safety is my utmost priority.

ONTARIO'S CREDIT RATING

Mr. Tim Hudak: My question is to the Premier. Later this morning, the Legislature will be voting on a budget motion asking us to endorse the direction of your government on fiscal issues which includes \$20 billion more in debt. The deficit goes up, not down, and it includes \$1 billion to buy the support of the NDP.

Premier, before the Legislature votes, I think it's important to ask you directly if you are confident that the credit rating agencies will not downgrade Ontario's credit rating as a result. Can you say with full confidence, Premier, we will not suffer yet another Liberal credit downgrade?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I apologize for being late; I had a modest proposal for building transit in the GTHA today, Mr. Speaker.

I want to thank the Leader of the Opposition for the question. I really believe that the budget that we have put forward is one that will spur the kind of job creation that we need in the province. It focuses on creating the conditions for job creation, and it also deals with the issues, addresses some of the issues, that affect people's day-to-day lives. I think that the Leader of the Opposition would be interested in that.

In terms of the bond rating agency, DBRS has confirmed the rating. They acknowledged a solid budgetary performance achieved for the year ended March 31, 2013. "Ontario handily exceeded expectations in 2012-13," and all trends remain stable. That is the news that we got yesterday, Mr. Speaker. I'm very confident that the budget that we've put forward is fiscally responsible.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Tim Hudak: The Premier did not express confidence that there won't be a further credit downgrade, which I think is of great concern. The credit rating is a measure, Premier, of the province's trustworthiness that we'll meet our obligations. Once the province loses that trust—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Minister of the Environment, come to order.

Mr. Tim Hudak:—spiral that we saw in Europe, where their debt obligations grew. They had less money to put into essential services like hospitals, highways and classrooms.

Yesterday, the former Liberal finance minister Dwight Duncan expressed concern of a further credit downgrade. He said the credit rating agencies will have "stern words" for you. I'll set aside the irony for a moment of Dwight Duncan talking about fiscal responsibility.

But I'll ask you, Premier—You've already had three credit downgrades under the previous finance minister—can you assure the House 100% that we won't have a fourth as a result of this big budget—

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

Premier?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Let's just say that under the current finance minister, here's what DBRS is saying:

"While several provinces have delayed their fiscal recovery plans in response to weaker growth, Ontario continues to target a return to balance (on its basis) by 2017-18."

1100

They go on to say, "Given the recent trend of outperforming budget targets and reduced borrowing needs, the debt trajectory is encouraging...."

We know we have challenges ahead of us. We know that there are hills yet to climb, but we are on a responsible path. We've had one confirmation of that. I am confident that we are going to be able to return to fiscal balance. We're going to be able to eliminate the deficit by 2017-18. That is what the markets are looking—

Interjections.

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

Final supplementary.

Mr. Tim Hudak: I say back to the Premier, when Dwight Duncan is lecturing you on fiscal responsibility, you know you've got a big problem. We've already seen you reference DBRS. As you know, Premier, DBRS did downgrade the province's credit rating, similarly to Moody's and Standard and Poor's.

Ontario families will have to actually pay the higher taxes the Premier has proposed recently—increasing the HST and increasing the gas tax. Average Ontarians need to look out for their own credit ratings. They make extraordinary efforts to protect that because it helps them to get a mortgage, to pay for a car, to make sure they can finance their kids' education. So too should the province of Ontario treat that credit rating as sacrosanct, to make sure you do everything to make sure we spend within our means, because we owe that obligation to hard-working Ontarians who are seeing more money wasted under this government.

I'll ask the Premier one last time, can she assure the Legislature that her budget that's going to drive up the debt, not down, drive up the deficit, not down—can you assure us we won't be hit with a fourth consecutive credit downgrade?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Thank you very much—

Interjections.

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

Premier?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I know that there will be other news today from another agency, but there was no downgrade yesterday. We are on stable ground, according to DBRS yesterday, so that is good news for Ontario. I would expect that the Leader of the Opposition of this great province would be celebrating that, would be saying that is a very good thing, that Ontario is on a solid track.

I will remind the Leader of the Opposition that we are on track to balance by 2017-18, that we are the government that has put in place a long-term plan to reduce the debt-to-GDP and that Ontario is recognized as a safe and secure place to invest. That is why we are attracting investment to the province.

I have confidence in Ontario. I really wish that the Leader of the Opposition had that same confidence.

COMMUNITY CARE ACCESS CENTRES

Mrs. Christine Elliott: My question is to the Premier. You have indicated that increasing home care services and achieving better value for health care dollars spent are top priorities. Community care access centres were established to award contracts to community nursing organizations and to assure value for money. However, recent actions taken by CCACs, with your government's approval, have actually moved Ontario in the opposite direction: higher costs for less service. CEO salaries have been allowed to skyrocket and the conflict of interest set up by the direct provision of home care services by CCACs has increased costs to the point that only 60% of health care dollars are actually spent on front-line services. CCAC staff have increased by 10%, but the provision of services to individuals has only increased by 5%. Premier, how can you possibly claim that you've increased home care services and value for money when the evidence clearly shows the opposite?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I know the Minister of Health will want to speak to some of the specifics.

I was in London last week, and Minister Matthews and I had the opportunity to visit a family who are at home, getting the care that they need, because the CCAC has been able to coordinate that care. One of the things that is happening is that coordination of all of the partners who deliver service on the front lines and the CCAC providing that kind of coordination. I honestly don't know exactly the specifics that the member opposite is speaking to, but what I do know is that there are more people getting more care in the province than there has been over the past decade. What I do know is that we have committed \$185 million more to provide for more home care and, in addition to that, more community care, which is exactly what families need.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mrs. Christine Elliott: You know what's really sad about this? There's been an increase in funding, but there isn't an increase in service. I'm sure that we all hear from people in our constituencies about thousands of people still on home care wait-lists.

But let's talk about where the money's actually going. The salary for the Central CCAC CEO went from \$180,000 in 2009 to \$272,000 in 2012. The salary for the Erie St. Clair CEO went from \$169,000 to \$221,000, and the Hamilton Niagara CEO's salary increased from \$213,000 to \$266,000. Mr. Speaker, the list goes on and on and on.

Premier, again, how can you possibly claim that you're increasing home care services when we have this kind of scandalous spending going on?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Well, the reality is that the kind of care that people are getting—and you know, we were in the Pattersons' home last week. It's about the care that people are getting actually in their home, but it's also about the community care—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Order.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: For example, the day programs that allow people who need that kind of support at home to go during the day to a program that is supported by the—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Renfrew, come to order.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: —and allows the caregiver at home to have that respite. There's a complex web of supports that need to be in place, Mr. Speaker. What we know is that the CCAC provides the coordination of that kind of care, and they provide it from the time a person is in hospital until they get that support and they start to heal at home.

I am convinced, Mr. Speaker, that the health care system is undergoing a transformation that is providing more care for people in their communities.

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

Mrs. Christine Elliott: What it should be about is getting more money to front-line service, and that's not what we're seeing happening. Certainly another complicating factor is the direct provision of home care services by the CCACs. It's a clear conflict of interest because the CCAC is the oversight body that awards the contracts to nursing providers, but now it's competing with the very organizations it's supposed to fund.

The RNAO, Registered Nurses' Association of Ontario, pointed this out in their recent report. They stated, "Programs suggest that the CCACs are taking on a more direct care role, which was not their intended purpose. The CCAC system does not possess the structure, mandate or capacity to deliver direct care to Ontarians. Moreover, this inappropriate function of the CCAC is destabilizing the community care workforce."

Instead of delivering more front-line services, evidence clearly shows they're simply building a larger bureaucracy. Community care organizations dare not speak up against this because CCACs are the ones that award this work—

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

Mrs. Christine Elliott: Premier, what will you do to end this—

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

Premier?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Health and Long-Term Care.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Speaker, I can tell you one thing: I will not be taking lessons on how to deliver high-quality health care from the party opposite. Their record speaks for itself. When they were in charge, Speaker, we—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): That'll do. Thank you.

Minister.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Speaker, when they were in power, they cut home care services to seniors, a 22% cut in nursing and 30% in homemaking services between 2001 and 2003, and their current white paper calls for the firing of 10,000 nurses. These people don't know what they're talking about.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock. Coming from both sides, it's very difficult to try to get that individual, but I have them in my head, and if I hear it again, I'll go right at them.

Finish, please.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Speaker, if the Conservatives genuinely cared about improving home care in this province, they would be supporting the budget that significantly expands home care services to the people who need it the most in this province.

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

To bring clarity, I will go to the leader of the third party for the primary questions. After that, the rest of the rotation comes back to the government side.

The leader of the third party.

1110

AUTOMOBILE INSURANCE

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question's for the Premier. Ontarians have told us that they need some relief. Their bills are going up but their paycheques aren't keeping up. That's why we called for a 15% reduction in auto insurance premiums. But people are worried that insurance companies are raising rates before any reductions. What does the Premier have to say to drivers who are concerned that they won't get the relief that they need and deserve?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: What I would say to drivers is that we agree with the leader of the third party that we need to do something about auto insurance premiums, which is why we were interested in acting on that. The NDP had a specific suggestion. We have committed to doing that and it is part of our budget proposal. So we want to get the budget passed. We want to work on getting the fraud out of the system, finding those savings and those savings being passed on to premium holders. We've made a commitment to do that in the budget. We look forward to getting the budget through the legislative process so that we can begin to implement it.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The Premier did listen to New Democrats and she promised Ontarians that she'll drop auto insurance premiums by 15%. But we've been hearing from drivers who have received notices recently of double-digit increases in their premiums. Ontarians want to know that the government will square that circle. What concrete steps will the Premier take to ensure that premiums go down like she promised?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: That plan is laid out in the budget. We have committed to an average reduction of 15% across the province. You know, it is an average and

we have to be clear that that doesn't mean that everyone will get an absolute 15% reduction. That was never the commitment by either party. It's in our budget. We want to get the budget passed. This one situation that the leader of the third party has raised I cannot comment on, but I know that the Minister of Finance has spoken with the industry. It is not our intention that there would be undue increases as we work up to the passage of the budget, but we do need to get the budget passed in order to be able to implement it.

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Yesterday the finance minister said, "We've been very direct in telling" the insurance companies "to maintain the rates at what they are." But New Democrats are hearing from drivers—not just the woman that was here yesterday, but dozens of drivers—who are getting big increases—big increases—in their premiums. Will the Premier take action today to ensure that rates are maintained as they are while we put the tools in place to start bringing them down?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: The way averages work is that some go up and some go down and some stay the same. The reality is that we could come up with lists of people who have had reductions in auto insurance, we could come up with lists of people who have had some increases in auto insurance and some for whom their premiums have stayed the same. What we have said is that overall we believe there should be a reduction of premiums. We have said we have committed to a 15% average reduction across the board. In order to be able to begin to implement our plan, we need to get the budget passed. I look forward to the support of the third party so we can do that and we can begin to implement those changes.

TAXATION

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My next question is for the Premier as well. Real investment in transit and transportation infrastructure is going to take long-term planning. In fact, Metrolinx estimates it will take 25 years of investment. The government has done its own long-term planning and has made it clear that they plan to cancel the fairness tax on high-income earners as soon as Ontario's books are balanced. If the government's worried about funding, can the Premier explain why she's planning a tax cut for people making over \$500,000 a year?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Again, at the root of this question is an intention to undermine the notion that we have to build transit in the greater Toronto-Hamilton area. There should be no debate about that. It should be very clear to anyone who is in touch with constituents who live in the greater Toronto-Hamilton area that we must do something about investment in transit for the next generation. It would be irresponsible of us as a collective to ignore this issue, because if we believe that the economy of the province is driven to some extent by this region, then we know that moving goods and people

around this region has to improve. So I reject the notion that we not move ahead on building transit. In terms of the tax regime, I will speak to that in the supplementary.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: What the Premier wants to do is undermine families who are having a hard time making ends meet these days in Ontario, while they give huge breaks to the people at the very top of the income scale in Ontario. New Democrats don't think that that's fair.

In addition to opening new tax loopholes that are going to allow corporations to get the HST off of their expenses like gasoline, the government said their first priority, as soon as the books are balanced, is more corporate tax giveaways.

If the Premier believes that Ontario needs long-term investment for infrastructure, could she explain why she has made corporate tax giveaways worth billions of dollars a priority?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: What I believe and what my team believes is that we must have a thriving economy. What that means is businesses must be competitive with our neighbouring jurisdictions. We must be able to attract investment to Ontario. This has to be a place where investment wants to come so that businesses can grow, and what businesses need, in addition to that kind of competitive tax regime, is the infrastructure in place so that they can move their goods across the GTHA, so that they can bring people to this region to live and work in those industries because people want to be here. They want to raise their families here because it doesn't take them two hours to get their kids to school or to daycare or to get themselves to work.

We're going to work on both fronts because it's a complex issue. We're going to work to make sure that the conditions are in place for business to come here and we're going to invest in transit so that we can grow the economy.

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: What I believe and what New Democrats believe is that we need a fair economy in the province of Ontario.

Just a few short months ago, one transit expert said this: "We need to ask less of those who can afford less, and more from those who are getting the greatest benefit from transportation investment—the private sector."

Quoting again: "Lots of people are calling for an 'adult conversation' about road pricing ... and even regional sales taxes...."

"[I do] not think Ontario families should pay more right now in the GTHA."

That expert, the Premier should know, is sitting kind of right behind her as the cabinet minister now for the Ministry of Transportation.

Can the Premier please explain to him, then, and to all of us why the government is open to new taxes for Ontario families at the same time they're planning to cut taxes for Ontario's wealthiest individuals and largest corporations?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: If the leader of the third party thinks it is fair for a single parent to have to get their kids up at 5:30 in the morning in order to get them to daycare so that they can get to their job, because they live in the 905 and they're coming into the 416 to work, I disagree. I disagree categorically that it is fair for us as a government to neglect our responsibility that has been neglected for at least a generation. We started building transit when we came into office in 2003, but before that there had been at least a decade of neglect on this file. So if the leader of the third party thinks that that neglect should continue, we're just going to have to agree to disagree, because I think those investments are necessary for the families of this constituency.

Interjections.

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

SPORTS AND RECREATION FUNDING

Ms. Dipika Damerla: My question is to the Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport. With the warm weather finally—very slowly—coming, it's really nice to see baseball diamonds and soccer fields in my riding brimming with children. In fact, it's really nice to just see children outside playing, whether they're just playing tag or they're on their bicycles, and that's because parents realize today that it's important that our children lead an active life.

One thing that parents are concerned about is injury while our children are playing, especially serious injuries like concussions. Can the minister tell my constituents in the riding of Mississauga East–Cooksville what this government's plan is for injury prevention?

1120

Hon. Michael Chan: I'm happy to answer the question from the honourable member from Mississauga East–Cooksville.

This week marks Safe Kids Week. As I mentioned earlier today, we're welcoming Parachute Canada to Queen's Park, and this year they are recognizing the importance of sport safety and concussion prevention.

Our government recognizes the importance of Ontarians being active in sport and recreation. Since 2003, we have invested over \$750 billion to support sport and recreation programs and we are eagerly committed to injury prevention. This is why we are working with the Coaches Association of Ontario to develop and expand concussion management education opportunities for Ontario coaches.

Speaker, we are also working with provincial and multi-sport organizations to ensure concussion protocols are developed for young athletes.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Dipika Damerla: Thank you, Minister, for that great answer. It's really good to see that the safety of our children continues to be a priority for this government.

Sometimes it can be a little bit challenging for families to make sure they're physically active. It costs money

and you need places to be able to be active. I'd like to know what this government is doing to help ensure that Ontarians have access to extracurricular and sports activities.

Hon. Michael Chan: Thank you for the question, again. I'm pleased to say that the successful expansion of after-school programs has enabled children to not only participate in a safe environment but also increase overall physical activity. The program now provides over 20,000 opportunities in more than 389 locations across Ontario. We want our province to be a healthy, prosperous place to live, work and play.

We provided over \$23 million to our sport partners in 2012-13 to promote participation and excellence in sport across our beautiful province. Through our investments, we are contributing to an Ontario that is both safer for kids and encourages them to get more involved and active overall.

ACCESS TO INFORMATION

Mr. Victor Fedeli: My question is for the Premier. Yesterday, the privacy commissioner expressed a very dim view of the actions of former senior staff in the Premier's office. The email accounts of three of the Premier's former staffers, including the chief of staff, no longer exist and can't be recovered—this, despite a legal requirement to keep all those records for five years.

Now, this doesn't happen by accident. It takes a deliberate act to make that happen. The commissioner said it "strained credulity" that they wouldn't know they were to retain their emails.

Premier, those emails are critical to the justice committee's investigation into your gas plant scandal. Would you please tell us what was in those emails so that we can get to the bottom of this scandal?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Government House leader.

Hon. John Milloy: Mr. Speaker, I can only repeat what I said to the honourable member from the New Democratic Party: I believe, at present, we have provided the committee 131,222—that's an approximate number—documents that have gone forth, with close to 30,000 from the Premier's office.

The member is raising an investigation that's going on by the Information and Privacy Commissioner, who is an officer of this House. We look forward to receiving her report.

In terms of the regime that we have in place for political staff, particularly the new ones who have come forward in this new government, we have had a training session across the board. We've also had individual training sessions so that they understand their responsibility.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Speaker, that's even more proof that even a high horse produces manure.

Premier, two Liberal staffers have even—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I have to tell the member I'm not overly impressed with that, and the tenor

of what was said is not acceptable. But I'll allow the member to decide if he wants to withdraw himself.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Thank you, Speaker. I will withdraw.

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

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Premier, two Liberal staffers have even more explaining to do for the deleted and destroyed emails. Craig MacLennan, the former energy chief of staff, now with a plum appointment at OLG, and Sean Mullin, the former policy adviser to the Premier, swore under oath they were screened off the file in April 2011, yet we presented emails yesterday that show MacLennan and Mullin deeply involved in the Oakville matters late into May and June of 2011. Conveniently, Mullin's email account is missing, and MacLennan admitted to the committee he deleted his emails.

Premier, can you tell Ontarians, what exactly are you hiding in these emails?

Hon. John Milloy: The witnesses in question come before the committee and they testify under oath in good faith. These are matters to be left to the committee.

But, you know, there is a bigger issue here, and that is why the Progressive Conservative Party seems to conveniently forget that they opposed the gas plants in the last election, to the point where their candidate had robocalls that were out there against them. I know that the Progressive Conservative Party probably regrets those robocalls. They have 85,000 reasons to regret robocalls.

The fact of the matter is, that was part of the campaign. Why will their candidates not come before the committee? Why will they not talk about their costing? Why are they pushing this whole committee matter, this whole subject matter, to the side? What do they have to hide?

HOSPITAL FUNDING

M^{me} France Gélinas: Ma question est pour la première ministre. Today, a busload of people made the trip from Kingston to Queen's Park because they want you to listen to them and to the thousands of people in their community. They are here to tell you that they do not want their new hospital to be a public-private partnership. They do not want it to be a P3.

Research has shown us that P3 hospitals cost 16% more than conventionally tendered hospitals. The residents of Kingston want their health care dollars spent on health care, not funnelled to the bank accounts of private for-profit companies, most of them offshore.

My question is simple: Will the Premier listen to the people of Kingston and stop the wrong-headed P3 plan for their hospital?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I actually have had the opportunity to speak to a number of the people in Kingston who are concerned about this. What I have heard overwhelmingly is that the people of Kingston want this hospital to be built. They want the hospital to be built. They want the hospital to be publicly owned, which it will be. It will be a publicly owned institution.

So the reality is that we need to get this important piece of infrastructure built. We are doing everything in our power to do that. I can assure the people of Kingston that this will remain a public institution.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

M^{me} France G  linas: The people of Kingston have seen what happens when a hospital is a P3. They have seen wasted taxpayers' dollars. They have seen dirty hospitals—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Member from Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound, come to order.

M^{me} France G  linas: They have seen cuts to patient care. They have seen broken promises.

In April, 10,000 of them came out for a vote to tell you to stop the P3 hospital. I have their ballots with me. I will deliver cases of them, 10,000 of them, to you. Premier, hospitals only succeed when they have the support of their community. Right now, the people are telling you that you are setting up this new hospital to fail.

I ask again: Will the Premier listen to the people of Kingston who came here today? Will the Premier listen to the 10,000 people who took the time to vote? Will the Premier listen to the thousands more who want you to stop this wrong-headed P3 plan? Will the Premier listen—

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

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Health and Long-Term Care.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: The people of Kingston very clearly want this hospital to be built, and they want it to be built now. If they don't want a P3 hospital or an AFP model, they can wait. They can wait for a long, long time. If they want the hospital built now, this is the model under which we can build it now. We're replacing a hospital that is over 100 years old. This hospital will provide much better care for the people who need access to it.

I've met with the Sisters of Providence. They are delighted that we're moving forward with this. If it's good enough for the Sisters of Providence, if the Sisters of Providence support this, then I am very proud to support it too.

1130

PHYSIOTHERAPY SERVICES

Mrs. Laura Albanese: My question is for the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. Last month, the minister announced changes to physiotherapy services in Ontario that will be implemented this summer. Many seniors in my riding of York South–Weston have been expressing concerns about these changes. They are being told that they will no longer be able to access physiotherapy and exercise classes in the community or in their retirement homes. And many have heard that physiotherapy will now be capped at 12 sessions, down from 150. Could the minister please explain what these changes will mean for Ontarians who need physiotherapy services?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Thank you to the member for this very important question. I welcome the opportunity to debunk some of the myths that are being spread by those who have a vested interest in the current model. The changes we're making to physiotherapy will significantly expand access to exercise classes, falls prevention classes and individual physiotherapy. We're doing this because the seniors of this province are depending on us to provide the best possible care. Let me be clear: Eligibility will remain the same. Seniors who are covered today will continue to be covered under the new model. Some 218,000 more Ontarians will be able to access this government-funded program. Exercise and falls prevention classes will be offered in the community and in retirement homes across the province. The classes are not being cut; they are being expanded. There will be no cap on the number of services people may receive—

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

Mrs. Laura Albanese: Thank you, Minister. Many seniors will be relieved that their services are not being cut, and many more will be encouraged by the fact that they should be expanded. However, some seniors in my riding, in York South–Weston, and I'm sure across Ontario, are being told that the government is cutting funding on physiotherapy services. They are also being told that current providers can offer these services to housebound seniors at a lower cost than community care access centres would under the new plan. Could the minister tell us if these claims are true?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Let me be clear: There will be no cap on the number of physiotherapy services that people can get if they need them. There will be many more locations from which these people can choose where they want to receive it.

The fact is we're increasing the budget for physiotherapy exercise and falls prevention classes, from \$146 million to \$156 million a year. It is not true that current providers can offer this service at a lower cost under the old model than through CCACs. Last year their average cost was \$750 per client compared to the CCAC average of \$480. Under the old system, costs are increasing at an unsustainable rate and care is uneven across the province.

The changes that we're introducing will allow us to offer exercise classes, falls prevention classes and high-quality, one-on-one physiotherapy to twice as many Ontarians in the community. I'm committed to doing the right thing.

CONSTRUCTION INDUSTRY

Mr. Jack MacLaren: My question is to the Minister of Labour. Minister, today I will be tabling my private member's bill titled Fairness is a Two-Way Street Act. This bill will shut the door on Quebec construction workers and contractors coming into Ontario.

In spite of countless agreements between Ontario and Quebec, Ontario construction contractors and workers have been virtually forbidden from working in the prov-

ince of Quebec, while Quebecers have had completely unfettered access to the eastern Ontario construction market. Ontarians believe in open borders but they are being taken advantage of and ultimately losing good jobs without equal access.

Minister, do you believe that working men and women in eastern Ontario are getting fair access to the Quebec job market?

Interjections.

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

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: Let me first thank the member opposite for bringing forward this issue. I want to thank the member for reaching out to me. We had an opportunity to sit down yesterday and talk about his bill. I look forward to the introduction of the bill and reviewing it. I've said to the member opposite that we'll work together.

One thing was clear from our conversation yesterday, that both our goals are aligned, and that is to create more good jobs for Ontarians. No government has done more to create jobs for Ontarians. The kinds of investments we have made and continue to make in our universities, colleges, schools, hospitals and community sectors—billions of dollars—have resulted in good construction jobs for Ontarians.

Speaker, Ontarians deserve a fair shot at competing for work in other jurisdictions, and that's what I and this government will fight for. But in order to ensure that, what we need to do is focus on fixing the problems but not creating new ones, and I look forward to speaking further in the supplementary to the member's question.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I'll wait for that to give you the supplementary, so you can hear my response.

Supplementary.

Mr. Jack MacLaren: Minister, the original Fairness is a Two-Way Street Act became law in 1999 to solve this worker mobility problem with Quebec. It was repealed in 2006 when the government signed the agreement on labour mobility between Ontario and Quebec. Since 2006, Quebec has gone back to their old ways of creating mountains of red tape and harassment activities that effectively shut Ontario contractors and workers out of the Quebec construction market and make those jobs unattainable to Ontario workers. Minister, will you and your eastern Ontario colleagues support the Fairness is a Two-Way Street Act and work with me and the people of eastern Ontario to try to open the door to fair trade with Quebec or, failing that, slam the door shut?

Interjections.

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

Interjections.

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

The Attorney General is now inches away from being warned, and if he says one more word, he will be.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: You're selling out every worker in eastern Ontario by this if you don't—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Nepean–Carleton, I would like you to come to order, please, because I'm in the middle of chastising somebody over here.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): And those kinds of comments are not wanted either.

Minister of Labour.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: I think what we need to really focus on is developing and building co-operation and fairness for both provinces, and that's exactly what the 2006 labour mobility agreement between Ontario and Quebec had done. It had resolved years of disputes over construction labour mobility. Now, under the agreement, qualified Ontario construction workers can also work in Quebec, not to mention that under the agreement the Jobs Protection Office works—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Order.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: —with Ontario workers to help resolve disputes—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Let me try it again: Order.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: —and also, in 2009 we started a head start program to ensure that we work with Ontario workers in creating opportunities for them in Quebec.

There will be a five-year effectiveness study that will be worked at as a result of the agreement. I think we should wait for that study to see what evidence we can decipher from over the last five years and then work on it further.

SENATE OF CANADA

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: My question is to the Premier. Two years ago, former Premier Dalton McGuinty took a pretty simple position on the Senate. This is what he said: "Ontario's position on Senate reform: Abolish the Senate." Why has the Premier abandoned that position?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: It is a pleasure to have the member for Ottawa Centre in the House today.

I will say to the member of the third party, as I have said to my colleague, that my position is actually that I don't think that chamber of sober second thought is a bad idea. Do I think it needs to be reformed? Absolutely. I think that there are definitely reforms that should take place, and that should be a conversation across the country.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: You know, Canadians watching the series of Senate scandals unfold don't think that appointed senators, especially those who abuse their privilege, represent Canadians' interests or their values, and until today their government seemed to agree. Again, I'm going to quote the former Premier, Dalton McGuinty. He said, "I think, frankly, to reform it in any substantive way is just not possible."

I just don't think we need a second, unelected, unaccountable body. Why has the Premier abandoned that reasonable position?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I think what the member for Ottawa South and I would categorically agree on is that there is no tolerance for abuse of taxpayers' dollars—absolutely.

Interjections.

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

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Order.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): As you can tell, I kind of let that one play itself out.

The Premier will wrap up.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: But there's so much to say, Mr. Speaker.

I am pleased that the members of the opposition have such enthusiastic energy. I do believe that where there is abuse of taxpayers' dollars, we have to respond and we have to be held accountable. I've made that very clear.

On the issue of the Senate, I believe that it is possible to reform the Senate. I believe that the abuses, that the discussion at the federal level, is unacceptable. We need to have that discussion across the country.

DEFERRED VOTES

2013 ONTARIO BUDGET

Deferred vote on the motion by Mr. Sousa, seconded by Ms. Wynne, that this House approves in general the budgetary policy of the government.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): We do have a deferred vote on the budget motion.

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

The division bells rang from 1143 to 1148.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): On May 2, 2013, Mr. Sousa moved, seconded by Ms. Wynne, that the House approves in general the budgetary policy of the government.

All those in favour of Mr. Sousa's motion, please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Albanese, Laura
Armstrong, Teresa J.
Balkissoon, Bas
Bartolucci, Rick
Berardinetti, Lorenzo
Bisson, Gilles
Bradley, James J.
Broten, Laurel C.
Campbell, Sarah
Cansfield, Donna H.
Chan, Michael
Chiarelli, Bob
Colle, Mike
Coteau, Michael
Crack, Grant
Craiton, Kim
Damerla, Dipika
Duguid, Brad
Fife, Catherine
Flynn, Kevin Daniel
Forster, Cindy
Gerretsen, John
Gélinas, France
Horwath, Andrea
Hoskins, Eric
Jaczek, Helena
Jeffrey, Linda
Kwinter, Monte
Leal, Jeff
MacCharles, Tracy
Mangat, Amrit
Mantha, Michael
Marchese, Rosario
Matthews, Deborah

Miller, Paul
Milloy, John
Moridi, Reza
Murray, Glen R.
Naqvi, Yasir
Natyshak, Taras
Oraziotti, David
Piruzza, Teresa
Prue, Michael
Qaadri, Shafiq
Sandals, Liz
Schein, Jonah
Sergio, Mario
Singh, Jagmeet
Sousa, Charles
Tabuns, Peter
Takhar, Harinder S.

Del Duca, Steven
Delaney, Bob
Dhillon, Vic
Dickson, Joe
DiNovo, Cheri

Mauro, Bill
McGuinty, Dalton
McMeekin, Ted
McNeely, Phil
Meilleur, Madeleine

Taylor, Monique
Wong, Soo
Wynne, Kathleen O.
Zimmer, David

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): All those opposed to the motion will please rise one at a time to be recognized by the Clerk.

Nays

Arnott, Ted
Bailey, Robert
Barrett, Toby
Chudleigh, Ted
Clark, Steve
Dunlop, Garfield
Elliott, Christine
Fedeli, Victor
Hardeman, Ernie
Harris, Michael
Hillier, Randy
Hudak, Tim

Jackson, Rod
Jones, Sylvia
Klees, Frank
Leone, Rob
MacLaren, Jack
MacLeod, Lisa
McDonell, Jim
McKenna, Jane
McNaughton, Monte
Miller, Norm
Milligan, Rob E.
Munro, Julia

Nicholls, Rick
O'Toole, John
Ouellette, Jerry J.
Pettapiece, Randy
Scott, Laurie
Shurman, Peter
Smith, Todd
Thompson, Lisa M.
Walker, Bill
Wilson, Jim
Yakabuski, John
Yurek, Jeff

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 65; the nays are 36.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I declare the motion carried. It is therefore resolved that this House approves in general the budgetary policy of the government.

Motion agreed to.

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

The House recessed from 1152 to 1500.

ESTIMATES

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

Hon. John Milloy: I wish to inform the House that I have a message from the Honourable David C. Onley, the Lieutenant Governor, signed by his own hand.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Please rise.

The Lieutenant Governor transmits estimates of certain sums required for the service of the province of Ontario for the year ending March 31, 2014, and recommends them to the Legislative Assembly.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mrs. Jane McKenna: I'd like to welcome to the Legislature one of my constituents, the founder and CEO of the Share the Road Cycling Coalition, Eleanor McMahon, who is here for the fifth annual Ontario Bike Summit and Share the Road's MPP reception, being held today from 4 to 7 p.m. in the legislative dining room.

M^{me} France Gélinas: Aujourd'hui, c'est une journée bien spéciale à Queen's Park; c'est l'Ordre de la Pléiade. Ça me fait extrêmement plaisir de vous présenter Major Élisabeth Allard, Maryse Baillairgé, Jean-Luc Bernard,

Peter Hominuk, Gérard Paraghamian et Linda Savard. Bienvenue à Queen's Park, tout le monde.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Welcome. We're glad you're with us.

Further introductions?

Mr. Jack MacLaren: It gives me great pleasure to introduce a friend, Walter Pamic, who is with Merit Ontario and flew here today to help us with a bill that we're going to table in a few minutes.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Welcome.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

ARBITRATION

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Communities across Ontario have for some time expressed frustration with the government's unwillingness to make needed changes to the arbitration system for municipal contracts. Earlier this year, the member for Simcoe-Grey brought forward a private member's bill that would have remedied this. However, the government, with help from the NDP farm team, voted it down, leaving towns and cities across Ontario even more exasperated.

On May 13, the city council of North Bay passed a resolution noting the negative financial impact the provincial arbitration system has on communities. They note that arbitration systems don't include a municipality's "ability to pay," putting further burden on the tax base. They also note that this government, in its throne speech, indicated it would "sit down with partners across all sectors to build a sustainable model for wage negotiation...." North Bay council resolved that "all parties ... support and consider, at the legislative level, a community's ability to pay in regards to the arbitration system." The status quo is no longer affordable, and the government can't keep its head in the sand on this issue any longer.

I can tell you that when I served as mayor of the city of North Bay and sat across the negotiating table with the arbitrator, we had spent a considerable amount of money on our city's negative ability to pay for these increases. We handed it to the arbitrator; all he did was slide it right back at me unopened—all of the thousands of dollars that we spent—and said to me, "I don't have to take your ability to pay into account."

INVESTING IN OUR DIVERSITY SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Last week, 12 young people from my riding received a scholarship for their post-secondary education, gained access to employment opportunities and were honoured for their leadership in Trinity-Spadina. The Investing in Our Diversity Scholarship Program is organized by the Scadding Court Community Centre, whose hard-working staff and innovative

programming have made it an important community hub and important local resource.

The scholarships are sponsored by local businesses, the Toronto Police Service, the University of Toronto, the Ontario College of Art and Design, Mount Sinai Hospital and people committed to diversity and inclusion from across Trinity-Spadina and Toronto.

This is the largest community-based scholarship program in the city of Toronto: 203 scholarships have been awarded over 11 years, valued at over \$500,000.

I would like to congratulate this year's recipients from Trinity-Spadina: Jeannette Mbabazi, Barry Zhuang, Shahzia Afghan, Zeenat Afghan, Ahmed Ali, Kamran Chowdhury, Lin Yin Lin, Katherin Orias Nguyen, Hannah Barnard-Chumik, Rashika Shalana Noel, Sakinna Gairey and Bryan Chavez.

These young people have worked hard to make Trinity-Spadina a better place, and their leadership is an immense asset to the community. I would like to thank them all for their contributions and wish them all the best in their future studies.

JEWISH HERITAGE MONTH

Mr. Mike Colle: As you know, Mr. Speaker, last year, with the help with of the member from Parkdale, MPP Cheri DiNovo, and the member from Thornhill, MPP Peter Shurman, we passed a bill declaring the month of May as Jewish Heritage Month in the province of Ontario.

This is the second year, and throughout the month of May there have been celebrations and recognitions all across Ontario honouring the incredible contributions Ontarians of Jewish heritage have made to our great province for over 225 years, going back even before the War of 1812, where they volunteered in great numbers.

Today, we're having a reception here at Queen's Park honouring this great month, and we've got incredible activities. We've got wonderful food, we've got kosher wine from Mazel Wines, we've got Caplansky's with deli sandwiches, Katz's Deli in my own riding, Milk 'n Honey Restaurant with their appetizers and kosher fruit tray, and the infamous—famous—United Bakers, which has been around for so long.

So today we're going to have it opened by my rabbi, Rabbi Yossi Sapirman, from Beth Torah. We're going to have the Consul General of Israel—DJ Schneeweiss is going to be here, and Dara Solomon from the Ontario Jewish Archives is going to be here with a wonderful display and video about being Jewish in Ontario.

We invite all members of the Legislature to come and celebrate Jewish Heritage Month with great food, great people and great heritage today at 5:30.

HALTON FOOD FOR THOUGHT

Mrs. Jane McKenna: Over the last couple of months we here in the Legislature debated the Local Food Act. We talked about the importance of protecting jobs in our

valuable farmland and green spaces. We talked about the importance of educating our children and youth about food and nutrition. And every day, while we talked, children across Ontario rolled out of bed and made their way to class despite a nutritional disadvantage. Struggling students can't close the achievement gap when they start each day on unequal footing.

Since 1997, Halton Food for Thought has dedicated itself to addressing that gap. It supports breakfast, emergency lunch or healthy snack programs to students throughout Halton region, promoting the link between healthy food choices and improved learning.

Thanks to the tireless efforts of its staff and volunteers and its passionately committed executive director, Gayle Cruikshank, Halton Food for Thought now runs nutritious programs at roughly 100 sites, reaching more than 21,000 students.

This past week, I had the great pleasure of being part of the organization's fourth annual breakfast gala, which focused awareness on its edible garden and farm-to-school programs in Halton schools. Efforts like these feed students, but more importantly, they nourish hope of a bright future for these children.

IRENE ATKINSON

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: I rise today with great good news. Many of us know the name Irene Atkinson. She is a long-standing—over 30 years—trustee in Parkdale–High Park and she was the victim of a terrible fire. In fact, when I first visited Irene after the fire, she was on a ventilator, in an induced coma, and we feared the worst.

Now, thanks to prayer—I have to put it out there—an unbelievable array of support; Irene would say so herself, the love and care of her three wonderful daughters—Maggie, Pam and Julie, thank you—Irene is up and walking.

I visited her last night. One could not be more shocked and gladdened and surprised than to see this woman, who was in a coma, walking, talking and right back to her feisty self. That's our Irene.

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She has always been and will be a force of nature: once a red Tory, then a New Democrat after the things Mike Harris did to the education system, but always a force of nature. I say to anybody here—anybody—that if you are an enemy of public education, Irene Atkinson is an enemy of yours, because Irene Atkinson always stands up for the children, for the children and public education, and she will continue to do so.

So she's walking, she's talking, she's healing. It's a miracle. It's major. Thank you to all for your cards, your flowers, your good wishes and your prayers. It worked.

LISGAR RESIDENTS' ASSOCIATION

Mr. Bob Delaney: Each spring, the Lisgar Residents' Association invites the western Mississauga community

to participate in their annual tree planting and community picnic in the Lisgar neighbourhood in Mississauga.

This year, I joined with the Lisgar Residents' Association, with many of my neighbours, Mayor McCallion, and other community environmentalists and nature enthusiasts at the tree planting at Cordingley Park. The 22nd annual Saturday tree planting was an opportunity to care for the environment and to meet your neighbours. After the planting, families enjoyed a picnic with games and activities for the kids.

Each year hundreds of trees are planted in Lisgar in northwest Mississauga. Today, those trees from years past provide shade, keep streams cool, protect the soil and beautify the neighbourhood even as they convert carbon dioxide to oxygen.

The Lisgar Residents' Association tree planting and community picnic also creates welcoming spaces for families to enjoy time together now and in the generations to come. We are teaching a whole new generation of kids to respect, sustain and renew nature through tree planting. Our congratulations to the Lisgar Residents' Association and to its energetic executive. You can find out more about the Lisgar Residents' Association's activities at lisgar.com.

APPRENTICESHIP TRAINING

Mr. Randy Hillier: Speaker, as you know, prior to my election as an MPP, I proudly worked as an electrician. On Thursday, May 23, I made a presentation to the Ontario College of Trades ratio review panel. They are considering revisions to the apprenticeship ratio for the electrical trade. During my presentation, I called on panel members Bernie Fishbein, George McMenemy and J. Richard Thomas to change the current restrictive ratio of 3 to 1 to a straight 1-to-1 ratio.

I was in very good company that day, with almost 80% of the presentations calling for a 1-to-1 ratio. Twelve of the presentations were from electrical contractors from across Ontario. These were hard-working small and medium-sized business people who came to ask the panel to revise this overly restrictive ratio and help them hire more young people in the province of Ontario as apprentices. I should also point out that over 98% of the written submissions to the panel called for a 1-to-1 ratio. The submissions came from electricians, apprentices, pre-apprentices, students and electrical contractors.

Speaker, if the Ontario College of Trades is truly a college by the trades and for the trades, I expect it will make the right decision and change this ratio to 1 to 1.

SPECIAL OLYMPICS

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: It's a pleasure to rise in the Legislature this afternoon to let you know about a terrific event that's become a tradition in my community of Oakville. Earlier this month, St. Mildred's–Lightbourn girls' school hosted the ninth annual Home Town Games

Soccer Tournament for Special Olympics. Special Olympics soccer teams from across the province travel to Oakville to play in a tournament that has an emphasis on fun and excitement and is completely free of charge. By all accounts, it was an enjoyable day for all those who participated, including myself.

More than 100 volunteers, made up of St. Mildred's students, parents, faculty and staff, support this tournament by raising money through pizza, raffle and bake sales, and helping organize the day's events.

This is just one of the many events the students helped to organize within the local community, which demonstrates to me and to all of us the outstanding leadership of this school. A big thank you must go out to event organizer and teacher, Nicki Newhouse, and her executive team, as well as the many volunteers who have dedicated their time and their effort into making sure that this tournament, run on behalf of Special Olympics, was the tremendous success it has been year after year.

BICYCLE SAFETY

Mr. Norm Miller: I rise in this House today to speak to an issue that is very important to the safety of Ontarians. With the Share the Road Cycling Coalition hosting their fifth annual Bike Summit this week, and here to visit us at Queen's Park today, I would like to thank Eleanor McMahon and the entire organization for helping to raise awareness on cycling issues.

Their mission is to make cycling safer in Ontario and to unite cycling organizations across Canada. With Eleanor as the lead, they have done an amazing job.

Working toward proving more safe cycling opportunities in Ontario's is important to me. Today I will reintroduce my private member's bill to require a minimum one-metre paved shoulder on designated provincial highways. This would be accomplished when roads are being rebuilt or resurfaced.

I believe there would be many benefits for Ontarians that would result from paving more shoulders of Ontario's highways. These benefits include safer cycling opportunities, more cycling tourism, a healthier population with the benefit of reduced health costs, reduced road maintenance costs and safer driving conditions for automobiles and commercial vehicles.

I believe that Ontario has the opportunity to be a national cycling destination. Just as the Route verte cycling network in Quebec contributes over \$100 million to the Quebec economy annually, Ontario can also share in the economic benefits that are associated with creating more opportunities for active transportation in the province.

I would also like to take this opportunity to remind all members of the Share the Road Cycling Coalition event today and encourage them all to attend.

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

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

HAWKINS GIGNAC ACT (CARBON MONOXIDE SAFETY), 2013

LOI HAWKINS GIGNAC DE 2013 (PROTECTION CONTRE LE MONOXYDE DE CARBONE)

Mr. Hardeman moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 77, An Act to amend the Fire Protection and Prevention Act, 1997 to provide safety requirements related to the presence of unsafe levels of carbon monoxide on premises / Projet de loi 77, Loi modifiant la Loi de 1997 sur la prévention et la protection contre l'incendie pour prévoir des exigences en matière de protection contre la présence, dans des lieux, de niveaux dangereux de monoxyde de carbone.

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

First reading agreed to.

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

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: This bill will expand the scope of the Fire Protection and Prevention Act to include carbon monoxide. It would allow the requirement for carbon monoxide alarms in all homes.

The short title is the Hawkins Gignac Act, in memory of a family from my riding of Oxford, who were tragically killed by carbon monoxide when their fireplace exhaust became blocked.

This bill has been modified to include changes requested by the Ministry of Community Safety. We've shown we are willing to work together to get this passed and protect Ontario families from carbon monoxide poisoning. I hope that all members will now work with us to pass this bill before any more tragedies occur.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask for unanimous consent to give second and third readings.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Mr. Hardeman has asked for unanimous consent to give second and third readings to this private member's bill. Agreed?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I heard a no. Introduction of bills?

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KINGSGATE II LIMITED ACT, 2013

Ms. Armstrong moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill Pr18, An Act to revive Kingsgate II Limited.

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.

KINGSGATE III LIMITED ACT, 2013

Ms. Armstrong moved first reading of the following bill:
Bill Pr19, An Act to revive Kingsgate III Limited.

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.

KINGSGATE IV LIMITED ACT, 2013

Ms. Armstrong moved first reading of the following bill:
Bill Pr20, An Act to revive Kingsgate IV Limited.

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, the bill stands referred to the Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills.

WESTMOUNT RIDGE ASSOCIATES
LIMITED ACT, 2013

Ms. Armstrong moved first reading of the following bill:
Bill Pr21, An Act to revive Westmount Ridge Associates Limited.

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, the bill stands referred to the Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills.

ELECTRONIC PERSONAL HEALTH
INFORMATION PROTECTION ACT, 2013LOI DE 2013 SUR LA PROTECTION
DES RENSEIGNEMENTS PERSONNELS
SUR LA SANTÉ FIGURANT DANS
UN DOSSIER DE SANTÉ ÉLECTRONIQUE

Ms. Matthews moved first reading of the following bill:
Bill 78, An Act to amend certain Acts with respect to electronic health records / Projet de loi 78, Loi modifiant certaines lois en ce qui concerne les dossiers de santé électroniques.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I heard a no.

All those in favour, say "aye."

All those opposed, say "nay."

I say that the ayes have it. Carried.

First reading agreed to.

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

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Speaker, I'll make my statement during ministerial statements.

PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION
AND HIGHWAY IMPROVEMENT
AMENDMENT ACT, 2013LOI DE 2013 MODIFIANT LA LOI
SUR L'AMÉNAGEMENT DES VOIES
PUBLIQUES ET DES TRANSPORTS
EN COMMUN

Mr. Norm Miller moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 79, An Act to amend the Public Transportation and Highway Improvement Act / Projet de loi 79, Loi modifiant la Loi sur l'aménagement des voies publiques et des transports en commun.

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

First reading agreed to.

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

Mr. Norm Miller: The bill amends the Public Transportation and Highway Improvement Act to require the Minister of Transportation to construct paved shoulders on prescribed portions of the King's Highway. The minister is required to construct paved shoulders on prescribed portions of the King's Highway when there is a significant undertaking to repave or resurface that portion. However, the minister is not required to construct paved shoulders where doing so would be impractical. These paved shoulders must be at least one metre wide and must be marked with a sign warning drivers to watch out for and share the road with pedestrians and cyclists.

If the minister has not made any regulations prescribing portions of the King's Highway within one year after this bill receives royal assent, the minister must table a report in the Legislative Assembly that provides reasons why such regulations have not been made and that describe the progress that has been made in identifying the portions that will be prescribed.

FAIRNESS IS A TWO-WAY STREET ACT
(CONSTRUCTION LABOUR MOBILITY),
2013LOI DE 2013 PORTANT QUE LA JUSTICE
N'EST PAS À SENS UNIQUE (MOBILITÉ DE
LA MAIN-D'OEUVRE DANS L'INDUSTRIE
DE LA CONSTRUCTION)

Mr. MacLaren moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 80, An Act respecting labour mobility in the construction industry aimed at restricting access to those taking advantage of Ontario's policy of free mobility / Projet de loi 80, Loi sur la mobilité de la main-d'oeuvre dans l'industrie de la construction visant à restreindre l'accès de ceux qui profitent de la politique de libre mobilité de l'Ontario.

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

First reading agreed to.

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

Mr. Jack MacLaren: This act will prohibit Quebec construction contractors and workers from being able to come to Ontario and work on provincial government contracts or municipal government contracts, and will also place some limitations on Quebec construction contractors and workers working on private contracts in Ontario.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

ELECTRONIC HEALTH INFORMATION

Hon. Deborah Matthews: It gives me great pleasure to introduce our government's Electronic Personal Health Information Protection Act, 2013, or EPHIPA. This proposed new legislation would amend the Personal Health Information Protection Act, 2004, the Drug Interchangeability and Dispensing Fee Act, 1990, and the Regulated Health Professions Act, 1991.

These amendments, if passed, would enable our government to fulfill our commitment to provide a safe and secure electronic health record, or EHR, for all the people of this province by 2015 while, at the same time, protecting the privacy of their personal health information.

The creation of shared electronic health records is critical to health system transformation. Shared electronic health records will allow information about laboratory results, medication histories and patient care currently contained in electronic medical records to be shared between multiple health care providers within a patient's circle of care. The result will be improved quality, safety and integration of patient care.

In order for shared EHRs to realize their full potential, a variety of complex health information systems must be connected to each other. Care providers must be able to electronically share patient data in order for patients to move seamlessly through the continuum of care; for example, from a checkup to a lab result to a hospital procedure to rehabilitation.

Ontario's health care system is complex, providing universal access to high-quality care for more than 13 million people, regardless of where they live in the province. Through our action plan for health care, our government is transforming health care so that all patients can have access to the right care, at the right time and in the right place. That means delivering the right care through family doctors, nurse practitioners, community health centres, hospital emergency rooms, physician specialists, home care providers and others.

We want to help our health care providers to work together as a team, with patients' care at the centre.

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Secure, shared electronic health records that protect every patient's personal health information is a key

enabler of this transformation. It will help transform our health care system from using mostly paper-based records to fast and efficient electronic sharing of data among authorized health care providers anywhere in the province.

But being fast and efficient is only part of the picture. Electronic sharing of information must also be secure. It must be designed in such a way as to protect the patient's privacy. That is why the proposed legislative amendments would provide individuals with control over who has access to their medical information in a shared electronic health record. They would establish rules for health care providers in using shared EHRs and would double existing penalties for privacy violations for those handling personal health information.

The proposed legislative amendments would also establish privacy and security requirements for shared electronic health records. They would clarify the authority under which health care providers may collect, use and disclose personal health information and shared EHRs. They would establish rules respecting an individual's right to issue a consent directive to mask his or her personal health information. They would clarify the limited circumstances under which a health care provider may override a consent directive. They would support treatment decision-making and enable a high standard of clinical care; for example, improved drug interaction check capability. They would establish a multi-stakeholder committee whose role would be to advise the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care on matters related to electronic health records.

It's important to note that we've held consultations about this proposed legislation between April 2011 and December 2012 with stakeholders, and we've collaborated closely with our partners to develop a policy and privacy framework to enable shared electronic health records. These partners include the Information and Privacy Commissioner, eHealth Ontario, nursing associations, medical associations and health professional regulatory colleges.

I am very pleased to say that the Information and Privacy Commissioner has expressed her support for the proposed amendments on the grounds that they will support shared electronic health record development while also protecting privacy.

Our government has already made significant progress toward implementing the elements of an electronic health record and toward moving related priorities forward. Now more than 10,000 community-based physicians and specialists use electronic medical records to care for more than nine million Ontarians.

In fact, two out of three Ontarians currently benefit from an electronic medical record. Chances are you have an electronic medical record in your physician's office. I know I do. That means details about the care you receive from a family doctor, specialist, nurse, dietitian or other health provider is captured electronically. We've worked hard to ensure that the personal health information contained in an electronic medical record remains secure and private.

Thanks to the electronic medical records currently in use, doctors are now able to receive hospital reports faster than ever. What used to take 12 days to transfer by mail or fax now takes 30 minutes or less to transfer digitally. Ontario physicians receive over 300,000 hospital reports into their EMR system each and every month, helping avoid hospital readmissions and reducing patient wait times. EMRs help to manage chronic conditions and prevent adverse drug interactions, to ensure that the medication history of all Ontario's seniors is accessible to health care providers across all hospital and emergency rooms, helping prevent adverse drug reactions in the event of an emergency. They help physicians get quicker access to online lab results and provide for a much more efficient and a much more integrated health care system.

This is incredible progress compared to where we were just a few short years ago. It means better care for patients, more efficient work for health care providers, and it's helping to save lives and improve our health.

I want to take this opportunity to thank Ontario's physicians, eHealth Ontario and everyone who has helped develop our electronic medical records for making this progress possible. Now we need to take the next step in integrating our health care system. We want to be able to share information about laboratory results, medication histories and patient care currently contained in electronic medical records through an electronic health record that is shared between multiple health care providers within a patient's circle of care.

Shared electronic health records are the next stage of electronic medical records. Shared EHRs bring together an individual's information registered with health care providers: your family doctor, specialists, health care teams and OHIP, the provincial health care plan. Eventually, shared EHRs will include data from hospital information systems, community care clinics and other providers as well.

Our proposed amendments would support better information sharing and coordination among all the health care providers and organizations a patient may come into contact with, resulting in improved health care, particularly for those with complex health care needs. For example, the diverse partners in a community health link—hospitals, primary care providers and community care—would all have access to the same health record for their patient. Better, more complete information leads to more integrated and coordinated care, so that no one falls through the cracks. Without these legislative changes, the implementation of shared EHRs could not proceed and the full benefits of this technology would not be realized.

Let me assure the members of this chamber, as well as each and every person in Ontario, that the privacy of everyone's personal health information is critically important to our government. These proposed legislative amendments would also protect each patient's rights to privacy and ensure that patients have choices about how their information may be shared across the health care team. They are part of our plan to protect the privacy and security of personal health information in shared

electronic health records, and I urge all members to support this.

SAFE KIDS WEEK

Hon. Michael Chan: Before I begin, I want to welcome Louise Logan and Amy Padro from Parachute Canada. They are in the members' east gallery. Welcome to Queen's Park.

On behalf of the government of Ontario, I am pleased to recognize Safe Kids Week, taking place from May 27 to June 2 this year. Safe Kids Week is an annual public campaign to raise awareness about childhood injuries in Canada, particularly serious injuries that can be prevented.

This year's theme is "Heads Up! Be Alert. Be Safe. Be Aware of Concussions." We know that there is growing concern about the effects that a concussion can have on an individual's health and well-being. I would like to applaud Parachute, a leading national advocate for injury prevention and organizer of Safe Kids Week. Thank you for getting Canadians talking about what we can do to prevent concussions from happening to our children and to our youth, and what we need to do when a concussion does happen.

This year's Safe Kids Week supports our government's efforts to ensure that all the people of Ontario can participate safely in sport and recreational activities. As Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport, my goal is to see this province getting more engaged in physical activity without getting sidelined by avoidable injuries. This is why our government works with communities, schools and sport organizations to develop programs that will strengthen the sport and recreation sector.

An important part of delivering these programs is ensuring that proper safety measures are in place. For example, provincial and multi-sport organizations that receive funding from the Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Sport must comply and monitor the highest safety standards.

My ministry, along with the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care, has worked collaboratively with Ophea, a not-for-profit organization that encourages children and youth to participate in healthy, active living. Together, we have developed the Ontario Physical Education Safety Guidelines. These guidelines outline safe practices to minimize the risk of injuries for children and youth during physical activity. We recently provided support to make the guidelines available to everyone, including schools, community sport and recreational organizations. These guidelines are also available to the public through the Ophea website. Our government recognizes that we can do more to educate the public about safe participation in sport and recreation. This is why we are helping to raise awareness about concussions: How to prevent them, identify them, manage and treat them so that the people of Ontario can lead safe, healthy, productive and active lives.

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We all have a role to play in the safety of our children and youth as they engage in sport and recreational

activities. Everyone—coaches, athletes, parents, students, school staff, volunteers and health care providers—can help to prevent, identify, manage and treat concussions.

Hockey Canada's recent decision to remove body-checking from peewee levels and below demonstrates the value of organized sports. Hockey Canada's decision is an excellent example of how sport organizations can work together to ensure a safe environment for participants, as well as offer developmental opportunities for our young athletes.

Our government is also making information available to the people of Ontario through our new concussion web portal at Ontario.ca/concussions. This web portal offers easy access to relevant and reliable resources that will help children and youth, as individuals and as teams, to lead active lives, injury free. We know that early detection of concussions and proper time for recovery can help reduce complications in the future.

Together with the support of our partners, sports organizations, school boards, health care professionals and organizations like Parachute, we will continue to help reduce injuries that can be prevented and help build a healthier, stronger and safer Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): It is now time for responses.

ELECTRONIC HEALTH INFORMATION

Mrs. Christine Elliott: I would very much have liked to have responded to the minister's statement on electronic health privacy records, but unfortunately I cannot. I would like to take a moment to explain the reason why.

Despite repeated requests from my office to get a copy of the bill so that I would understand what I was responding to this afternoon, I was not provided with it until just a few minutes ago. You can see, by the amount of material that we've been provided with and the seriousness of this topic, that I should have had that before now.

I'd like to read to you an email that I received back from the minister's office in response to my request for a copy of this bill: "Unfortunately, we cannot get a copy of the bill to you yet, but we can ensure MPP Elliott gets a copy shortly before the minister begins speaking on Wednesday. We're also happy to be available to her to answer any questions over at the Legislature while it's being introduced."

I would say, over and above the complete lack of co-operation with me and my staff, and the disrespect that was shown to them, this is also impeding my ability to do my job here in this Legislature and to respond in a rational manner. To expect me to be briefed while listening to the minister's statement and then make a cogent statement is simply not possible.

I'm not sure whether it's appropriate for me to raise a point of order while I'm making a statement, but I would also say that the statement that was provided to us previously that the minister was going to make in this House this afternoon—about 90% of it was not contained in this document.

Mr. Speaker, I would ask that you take this under consideration and provide us with a ruling with respect to this, because we simply cannot do our jobs operating this way.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Just so that the House knows, I sought some clarification to ensure that I was providing you with the proper guidance. The government is obliged to provide you with a copy of the bill at the time of introduction. It is not obliged to give you anything before that.

The second part of your concern raised could be valid if they did not share with you what was read in the House. You should have received a full copy of that. If something was sent to you before that is not part of the speech but you then got a copy of the speech that was delivered and you have that copy with you that is complete, then that has been fulfilled. If it has not, then the government's responsibility is to fulfill that.

I would offer the Minister of Health an opportunity on her point of order, and I'll come back to the member from Whitby—Oshawa.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Thank you, Speaker. Let me apologize to the Legislature. I have just discovered that I read an earlier version, so I apologize for that. I would be more than happy to read into the record the other version, although I think substantively the information is the same.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I appreciate the clarification, and I would turn to the member from Whitby—Oshawa with the understanding that I obviously will reset the clock if there is a continuation of comments that you wish to make. The member may proceed.

Mrs. Christine Elliott: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I do appreciate that, and I appreciate the minister's clarification. But the fact does remain—and I don't expect that this version be read into the record, but I certainly would appreciate the opportunity to at least be given basic information before I'm expected to rise in this House and make a statement on a very, very serious matter. While there may not be a strict rule in this matter, I would suggest that common courtesy would dictate that in the future.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I would trust that in both members' situations, we would seek to get together to clarify that piece. I believe that the member has fulfilled her duty, but your point has been taken, and I appreciate that.

I think we now have the clock reset. The member from Durham.

SAFE KIDS WEEK

Mr. John O'Toole: Yes, thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a hard act to follow.

However, I would like to also welcome the sponsors of Safe Kids Week here today. I'm pleased to respond on behalf of our leader, Tim Hudak, and the members of the PC caucus. I assure you, as a parent of five grown children and 10 grandchildren, I have a genuine interest in Safe Kids Week every week. This is May 27 to June 2

and gives a heads-up to parents, youth organizations and the general public about the risks of concussions amongst children and teens—a popular topic. The goal is to raise awareness and to encourage parents, caregivers and the wider community to take action.

With high-profile athletes like Sidney Crosby suffering concussions, head injuries have a higher profile in professional sports and at the local arena, ball diamonds or playgrounds. The members will no doubt be aware that Hockey Canada directors voted at their recent annual general meeting to ban bodychecking for peewee hockey players.

Because of increased awareness and advocacy, which is what we're talking about today, we understand that concussions are brain injuries, which must always be taken seriously. It is important to recognize symptoms and to seek medical help and to educate the public. In addition to concussion awareness, Safe Kids Week is a time to consider all aspects of children's safety: pedestrian safety, poisoning prevention, drowning prevention, household safety and farm safety, plus the use of car seats and helmets, among other initiatives from Parachute Canada.

I would like to pay tribute to the dozens of sports organizations in my riding and indeed across Ontario and the volunteers that encourage children in their fitness, skill development and teamwork, and the many positive values through the sports that all children should be participating in. A few of these organizations include minor hockey associations in my riding specifically, of Clarington, Port Perry and Uxbridge, as well as groups such as the Darlington Soccer Club and the Clarington Orioles baseball team.

I am confident Safe Kids Week will enable families, sports organizations and young people to become more safety conscious. It should become part of a safe sports culture. Parachute Canada points out that preventable injuries claim the lives of more Canadian children than any other single disease. That's unforgivable. Injuries also cut short the lives of more youth than all other casualties combined. With renewed commitment to safety, these deaths can be prevented, along with the pain and suffering from childhood issues.

I would encourage all members today to work in partnership and to support Safe Kids Week, May 27 to June 2.

1550

SAFE KIDS WEEK

Mr. Paul Miller: My response to Safe Kids Week: "Heads Up! Be Alert. Be Safe. Be Aware of Concussions" are the themes for the 2013 Safe Kids Week.

The one I'm most familiar with is concussions from sports. When I was playing at a high level and refereeing sports, the player was expected to shoulder an injury within that game or come back for the next game—maybe missing a game or two at the worst, but back into the game. Thankfully, today's players are making it the serious issue that it should always have been.

When I played, I was taught how to take a hit, give a hit and take a fall. Recent decisions to take hitting out of peewee hockey leave me concerned about the impact of moving to the next level. When these kids leave peewee, they move on to bantam a year and a half later, where hitting is allowed. How will this child be prepared to take a hit, to take a fall, to know how to protect himself? We should find a way to teach these kids how to move to the next level.

I believe that there should be very serious consequences for any individual who deliberately takes a headshot. This should result in immediate suspension and serious repercussions from the team and the league. Any offender should be required to learn about the permanent damage that they could cause. A third-time offender should be suspended for at least the remainder of the season. Before the third-time offender returns, he should know that any additional incident will result in a long-term ban from the sport, maybe for good.

Another activity that can cause serious injury to a child is playing around water. Swimming and playing in the water can be a wonderful way to spend the summer, but we must ensure that our children can take some measures to protect themselves at all ages. Water safety courses are available across the province, and we should work with our municipalities, our education system and our child care facilities to ensure that our children are as water-wise as possible.

Not only our children need to learn about water safety. Too often, we hear of a water tragedy where the parents or caregivers have turned away for just a moment; it takes only a moment for a tragedy to happen. And let's not forget about our teenagers, who might be more inclined to take a dive into an unknown or too-shallow water. We can then take positive action by encouraging peer pressure to do the right thing, to take responsibility for the health and well-being of others, as well as themselves.

In all of these and the many other scenarios where being alert, safe and aware of concussions can be found, our government must take the lead in supporting—in fact, initiating—programs to ensure that we reach the prevention and awareness goals to reduce the injuries suffered by Ontario's children—the sooner, the better.

ELECTRONIC HEALTH INFORMATION

M^{me} France Gélinas: I want to echo the comments that were made by the member from Whitby–Oshawa, who had not been given any briefing about this bill. I came to my desk to pick up an inch and some of paper, and on the top of it is "Drug Interchangeability and Dispensing Fee Act." I'm thinking, "Wow; what is happening here?" I have no idea what is in this bill. I was not able to follow it because, like her, the documents that I had had nothing to do with the documents that the minister read. It was a little bit weird, to say the least.

Never mind that; this kind of has been explained. I'm still disappointed. Here we are, in a minority government

where everybody goes above and beyond to try to work together, to try to make things work, to try to get results, and then we get this. I'm disappointed, especially at a time when we know that the protection of personal information is at stake.

Did you know, Mr. Speaker, that if you went to Rexall to get your flu shot, they took your information and thought, "Wow, look at all the databases of addresses that we now have. We're going to send all of those people some marketing information. Would you be interested in a discounted bag of chips at Rexall?" Tell me how a plan of care could include buying chips at Rexall, Mr. Speaker, and I will fall off my chair.

Right here, right now in Ontario there are for-profit companies using our personal health information for matters other than our plan of care. We have an example of this. Is the Minister of Health jumping out of her seat and saying, "We have to do something"? Absolutely not. It is dead silence from the ministry and the Minister of Health. It is actually the Office of the Information and Privacy Commissioner who is doing the follow-up.

I'm all for new laws regarding personal health information and protection. I get it, that personal information, health information, should not be shared, but more laws that are not enforced don't serve us that well. Meanwhile, it's full steam ahead for the for-profits to use our information and sell us chips.

VISITORS

Mr. Vic Dhillon: Point of order, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Vic Dhillon: I'd like the House to join me in welcoming my good friends from India, Mr. Verinder Kumar, his wife, Puja Sharma, and their beautiful daughters. They came to Canada yesterday.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Welcome. It is now time for petitions.

PETITIONS

DRIVE CLEAN

Mr. Randy Hillier: "A petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario—Drive Clean:

"Whereas the Auditor General specifically warned the government to delay implementation of the new Drive Clean test to ensure technical testing was completed and problems were resolved; and

"Whereas the AG also recommended that due to modern improvements in vehicles and fuels, vehicle emissions are no longer a major contributor to smog in Ontario and this program be phased out; and

"Whereas the fail rate for vehicles through this new system has skyrocketed due to the shortcoming of the test itself and not emissions problems with the vehicle,

making Drive Clean nothing more than a tax grab for the government;

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

"That the government of Ontario eliminate the Drive Clean program."

Speaker, over 872 people have signed my electronic petition on this as well. I am in agreement with it, affix my name to it and give it to page Melanie.

DENTAL CARE

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas the Kingston Dental Coalition is very pleased that the Ontario government is moving forward with its Poverty Reduction Strategy by funding the CINOT Program, which provides urgent and essential dental care free of charge to children in low-income families. The Ontario government has also helped implement the Healthy Smiles Ontario program for children 17 and under who do not have access to any form of dental coverage. We, the Kingston Dental Coalition, see this as an important step towards poverty reduction and improved health. But we are requesting an implementation for funding a program which provides urgent and essential dental care for low-income adults, including seniors, who are living with oral pain and infection.

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

"To work quickly to implement the dental pledge made."

I agree with this petition, and I'll affix my signature to it.

SERVICES FOR THE DEVELOPMENTALLY DISABLED

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Not necessarily in rotation, and in apology to the member from Parkdale—High Park: the member from Parkdale—High Park.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This is a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas agencies that support individuals with a developmental disability and their families have for several years (beginning in 2010) faced a decline in provincial funding for programs that support people with developmental and other related disabilities; and

"Whereas because this level of provincial funding is far less than the rate of inflation and operational costs, and does not account for providing services to a growing and aging number of individuals with complex needs, developmental service agencies are being forced into deficit; and

"Whereas today over 30% of developmental service agencies are in deficit; and

"Whereas lowered provincial funding has resulted in agencies being forced to cut programs and services that enable people with a developmental disability to partici-

pate in their community and enjoy the best quality of life possible; and

“Whereas in some cases services once focused on community inclusion and quality of life for individuals have been reduced to a ‘custodial’ care arrangement; and

“Whereas lower provincial funding means a poorer quality of life for people with a developmental disability and their families and increasingly difficult working conditions for the direct care staff who support them; and

“Whereas there are thousands of people waiting for residential supports, day program supports and other programs province-wide;

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

“(1) To eliminate the deficits of developmental service agencies and provide adequate new funding to restore services and programs that have in effect been cut;

“(2) To protect existing services and supports by providing an overall increase in funding for agencies that is at least equal to inflationary costs that include among other operational costs, utilities, food and compensation increases to ensure staff retention;

“(3) To fund pay equity obligations for a predominantly female workforce;

“(4) To provide adequate new funding to agencies to ensure that the growing number of families on wait-lists have access to accommodation supports and day supports and services.”

I couldn’t agree more. I’m going to sign it and give it to Christine to deliver to the table.

1600

HIGHWAY IMPROVEMENT

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: I’m pleased to share this petition, which reads as follows:

“To the Legislative Assembly:

“Whereas the Ministry of Transportation has indicated it will be making improvements to Highway 21 between Port Elgin and Southampton in 2014; and

“Whereas the ministry has not acknowledged the repeated requests from the community and others to undertake the safety enhancements to the portion of the highway where it intersects with the Saugeen Rail Trail crossing; and

“Whereas this trail is a vital part of an interconnected active transportation route providing significant recreational and economic benefit to the town of Saugeen Shores, the county of Bruce and beyond;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, hereby petition the Legislative Assembly of the province of Ontario to require the MTO to include, as part of the design for the improvements to Highway 21 between Port Elgin and Southampton, measures that will enhance the safety for motorists, pedestrians, bicyclists and all others that use the Rail Trail crossing; and to consult and collaborate with the town of Saugeen Shores and other groups in determining the cost-effective measures that will maintain the function of the highway while aligning with

the active transportation needs of all interested parties who use the Saugeen Rail Trail.”

I totally agree with this petition, and I’ll give it to Alex to take to the table.

FAMILY SAFETY

Mr. Bob Delaney: I’ve got a petition addressed to the Ontario Legislative Assembly sent to me by individuals in Newmarket, Toronto, Mississauga and Burlington. It reads as follows:

“Whereas the Safer Families Program is a successful partnership of Catholic Family Services Peel-Dufferin, Family Services of Peel and the Peel Children’s Aid Society (CAS), receives year-to-year funding from the Ontario Ministry of Children and Youth Services, and is a critical component of social services to families within the Peel” region; “and

“Whereas the intervention model for Safer Families currently operates with no waiting lists, an important consideration for families experiencing domestic violence and child protection concerns, as they require immediate access to service; and

“Whereas the Safer Families Program is aligned with Ontario’s child poverty agenda, is committed to preventing violence against women, and contributes to community capacity building to support child welfare delivery; and

“Whereas currently, Safer Families serves 14% of all domestic violence cases referred to Peel Children’s Aid Society and has the ability to double the number of cases it handles;

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

“That the government of Ontario adjust its funding to supply ongoing core funding rather than year-to-year funding, and realign funding to double the percentage of cases referred by the Peel Children’s Aid Society and served by the Safer Families Program.”

I completely agree with this petition. I’ll affix my signature to it and ask page Vanessa to carry it.

PHYSIOTHERAPY SERVICES

Mr. John O’Toole: I’m pleased to present a petition from my riding of Durham. It reads as follows:

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the Ministry of Health is planning on eliminating OHIP-funded physiotherapy services currently provided to seniors in retirement homes—and changing the current provider of the service as of August 1st, 2013; and

“Whereas the Minister of Health has announced a total of \$33 million in physiotherapy funding, or \$550 per senior for 60,000 seniors, including those in retirement homes; and

“Whereas instead of the 100 to 150 visits per year a senior may receive now from their dedicated on-site OHIP physiotherapy staff, the change would mean a

CCAC therapist would provide 5 to 10 visits on-site only to seniors who are bedridden or have an acute injury. All other ambulatory seniors would have to attend other community locations/clinics for physiotherapy and exercise off-site; and

“Whereas this change not only reduces the amount of money available, but also moves funds from the lowest-cost provider (OHIP physiotherapy providers—\$12.20 per treatment) to the highest-cost provider (CCAC—\$120 per treatment); and

“Whereas current OHIP physiotherapy providers, who have been providing seniors with individualized treatments for over 48 years, will be delisted from OHIP by the government; and

“Whereas these services have been proven to help seniors improve in their activities of daily living, mobility, pain and fall risks;

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

“To review and reverse the decision to eliminate OHIP physiotherapy services to seniors in retirement homes, our most vulnerable population and most at risk for falls; and continue with the provision of at least 100 treatments per year with a mechanism to access an additional 50 treatments, if medically necessary, with the current low-cost OHIP physiotherapy providers.”

I'm pleased to sign and support it, and give it to Michael, one of the pages.

PHYSIOTHERAPY SERVICES

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: This is to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

“Whereas the Ministry of Health is planning to delist OHIP physiotherapy clinics as of August 1st, 2013, which represents cuts in physiotherapy services to seniors, children and people with disabilities who currently receive care at designated OHIP physiotherapy clinics; and

“Whereas people who are currently eligible for OHIP physiotherapy treatments can receive 100 treatments per year plus an additional 50 treatments annually if medically necessary. The proposed change will reduce the number of allowable treatments to 12 per year; while enhancing geographical access is positive, the actual physiotherapy that any individual receives will be greatly reduced; and

“Whereas the current OHIP physiotherapy providers have been providing seniors, children and people with disabilities with individualized treatments for over 48 years, and these services have been proven to help improve function, mobility, activities of daily living, pain, and falls risk;

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

“To review and reverse the decision to drastically cut OHIP physiotherapy services to our most vulnerable population—seniors, children and people with disabilities; and to maintain the policy that seniors, children and

people with disabilities continue to receive up to 100 treatments per year at eligible clinics, with a mechanism to access an additional 50 treatments when medically necessary.”

I'm going to give this to Hannah to be delivered to the table.

ONTARIO COLLEGE OF TRADES

Mr. Bill Walker: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas Ontario's tradespeople are subject to stifling regulation and are compelled to pay membership fees to the unaccountable College of Trades; and

“Whereas these fees are a tax grab that drives down the wages of skilled tradespeople; and

“Whereas Ontario desperately needs a plan to solve our critical shortage of skilled tradespeople by encouraging our youth to enter the trades and attracting new tradespeople; and

“Whereas the current policies of the McGuinty/Wynne Liberal government only aggravate the looming skilled trades shortage in Ontario;

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

“To immediately disband the College of Trades, cease imposing needless membership fees and enact policies to attract young Ontarians into skilled trade careers.”

I support this petition and will send it with page Jack.

TIRE DISPOSAL

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I have a petition here to the Legislative Assembly that was presented—they come from all over the province; this bunch that I got in the mail just recently came from Lambton-Kent-Middlesex. It's to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

“Whereas the Ontario government has approved massive increases to Ontario Tire Stewardship's eco fees for agricultural tires, increasing some fees from \$15.29 to \$352.80, \$546.84 or \$1,311.24;

“Whereas Ontario imposes tire eco fees that are dramatically higher than those in other provinces;

“Whereas other provincial governments either exempt agricultural tires from recycling programs or charge fees only up to \$75;

“Whereas these new fees will result in increased costs for our farmers and lost sales for our farm equipment dealerships;

“Whereas the PC caucus has proposed a new plan that holds manufacturers and importers of tires responsible for recycling, but gives them the freedom to work with other businesses to find the best way possible to carry out that responsibility;

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

“Please suspend the decision to significantly increase Ontario Tire Stewardship's fees on agricultural and off-

the-road tires pending a thorough impact study and implementation of proposals to lower costs.”

ONTARIO COLLEGE OF TRADES

Mr. Bill Walker: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas Ontario’s tradespeople are subject to stifling regulation and are compelled to pay membership fees to the unaccountable College of Trades; and

“Whereas these fees are a tax grab that drives down the wages of skilled tradespeople; and

“Whereas Ontario desperately needs a plan to solve our critical shortage of skilled tradespeople by encouraging our youth to enter the trades and attracting new tradespeople; and

“Whereas the current policies of the McGuinty/Wynne Liberal government only aggravate the looming skilled trades shortage in Ontario;

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

“To immediately disband the College of Trades, cease imposing needless membership fees and enact policies to attract young Ontarians into skilled trade careers.”

I support this petition and will send it with page Michael.

1610

WIND TURBINES

Mr. Bill Walker: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas residents of Ontario, mayors and councillors from more than 80 municipalities and Ontario’s largest farm organizations and rural stakeholders, the Ontario Federation of Agriculture and the Christian Farmers Federation of Ontario, seek an immediate moratorium on new wind development until an independent and comprehensive health study has determined that turbine noise is safe to human health; and

“Whereas the provincial Liberal government’s study back in 2011 failed to conclude anything more than that it needed to continue to study the turbine sound impacts; and

“Whereas the federal government is launching, through Health Canada, the first comprehensive study of health impacts of wind turbines;

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

“That the Liberal government follow the federal lead, accept the objective of the federal wind study, agree and accept that until the study is finished it will not approve any new wind turbine projects in Ontario, effective immediately.”

I support this petition and will send it with page Michael, as well.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Is the member ready to go again, or are we all right?

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): You’re out of luck; we’re out of time.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

ORDER OF BUSINESS

Resuming the debate adjourned on May 29, 2013, on the amendment to the motion to apply a timetable to certain business of the House.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): We left off with Mr. Leal; I don’t see him.

Further debate?

Mr. Randy Hillier: I’ll be speaking on this motion and the amendment, but before I do so, I’m going to move a sub-amendment to the amendment related to the programming motion by adding a new sentence under the original amendment, as follows: “In the event of prorogation, before the want of confidence motion standing in the name of the member from Simcoe–Grey is called, the motion shall be placed on the Orders and Notices paper on the second day of the subsequent session and shall be called on the fifth sessional day of the new session.”

Speaker, today we’re debating this—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Hang on. I’ll do it. I have to read it.

Mr. Hillier has moved a sub-amendment to the amendment related to the programming motion by adding a new sentence under the original amendment, as follows: “In the event of prorogation, before the want of confidence motion standing in the name of the member from Simcoe–Grey is called, the motion shall be placed on the Orders and Notices paper on the second day of the subsequent session and shall be called on the fifth sessional day of the new session.”

Mr. Hillier.

Mr. Randy Hillier: This motion that’s before the House and the amendment and the sub-amendment—really, what we’re debating here is a motion written by the not-so-junior members of the coalition, the NDP, in addition to, of course, our PC amendments to the motions. For the record, the objective of this motion that’s before us is to cement the NDP budget demands into law and is motivated by a strong desire by members of the NDP and the Liberals to be on summer holidays soon. That’s the objective and the motivation behind this budget. For the record and for those who are watching, this motion seeks to diminish and end debate on the budget before all members have an opportunity to voice their constituents’ perspectives and their constituents’ concerns.

What I find is the most atrocious element of this motion is paragraph (c), which creates a new officer of Parliament without debate or deliberation by this House. Speaker, we know that there cannot be safeguards to the public interest with regard to public policy without the scrutiny of debate. This motion diminishes and prevents debate.

It ought to be evident, and I'm indeed confident that everybody agrees, that we need financial accountability over the disposition of taxpayers' money. I'm sure we all agree with that, especially in light of the numerous—

Mr. John Yakabuski: Scandalous.

Mr. Randy Hillier:—scandalous, atrocious waste of taxpayer money, over the years that I've been here, by this Liberal government. But it's elementary and indeed foolish to believe that we can actually achieve financial accountability if we do not first exercise legislative accountability. For the NDP to propose, and the Liberals to agree to pass, this far-reaching bill, the creation of a brand new parliamentary officer before and without debate, I find disrespectful to this assembly; I find it disrespectful to the people of Ontario.

They are agreeing to create this new officer of Parliament. They've agreed to pass this bill although the bill has not been tabled in this assembly. It demonstrates a very cavalier regard to the people of this province and to the people of this assembly. I know the NDP like to portray themselves as standing up for the little guy, but I think in this regard their actions are betraying that persona, and it is a façade.

This motion is really about power, political power—those who will wield it and those who will benefit from it. But I can say with confidence it is not the little guy or the people of Ontario. This motion is not about the people of Ontario. I want to just reiterate this and read right from the motion.

This motion, paragraph (c), the creation of a financial accountability officer, "Two hours shall be allotted to the second reading stage of the bill." That's on page 12 of today's orders—two hours apportioned between the three parties. "The committee is authorized to meet for two sessional days...." And here, "In the event that the committee fails to report the bill on the first sessional day following clause-by-clause ... the bill shall be deemed to be passed ... and" will "be ordered for third reading...." And "Two hours will be allotted for third reading."

Speaker, I've been in this House for my second term now. I know the NDP has always clearly enunciated and articulated the need for public scrutiny on policy. They've been a very, very vigorous defender against time allocations and closures. I find it disappointing that the NDP are now throwing away that history, throwing away that commitment when, really, in time of minority Parliament there is no greater time and more important time to uphold that scrutiny of public policy and that demand and expectation for full and wholesome discussion and debate of the government.

I'm not sure who's holding who to account these days in this Parliament, but looking at this motion it is certainly not the NDP. They are part and parcel with the government in seeking power. If either the Liberals or the NDP truly had the interest of the people of Ontario in mind, or they had an interest in the constituents, we would have seen a very, very different motion in front of this House.

Every member in this House, I'm sure, like myself, receives many, many calls, many emails and many letters

imploping and asking for assistance, demonstrating how government is not working for them. People like Cheryl Dunlop, who called me, who has now three smart meters on her little business in Lanark county and could not get any satisfaction from Hydro One. Hydro One, instead of fixing the problem, keeps sending her estimated bills—estimates that are based on previously wrong estimates—and atrocious bills with it.

1620

But there's no talk of Cheryl Dunlop and the problems of Hydro One in this motion. There has been no talk of it during this budget process. Hydro One just tells these people, "Pay up, because you know we're Hydro One and we're right."

I also got a call from Robert and Shirley Grosse, who run a Bell Canada Enterprise office. Now, picture this: a Bell Canada Enterprise office. They received a bill from Hydro One for their seasonal cottage, with an error of over \$10,000—a \$10,000 hydro bill for a seasonal cottage. They were told by Hydro One, by their customer service, "Pay up, because we're right."

I don't think the NDP and the Liberals were thinking of Robert and Shirley Grosse when they crafted up this motion that's before the House now. And you know there's something wrong when Bell Canada complains about Hydro One's customer service. That should be obvious.

But how about some of the problems we have with the delivery of services to those people who are truly—should be—government's commitment and concern, those people with developmental disabilities?

I have a constituent, Karin Steiner. Her son Nicholas has been on the emergency list for longer than I've been a member of this House and is still waiting for the services he needs for his care. No talk about that in this motion for Karin Steiner and her son Nicholas, or for Jean Ruttan's son Elden, who has been on the pressures and priorities list for eight years and red-flagged for the last four, and he still waits. He still waits. No talk about the Ruttans in this motion, or Danny and Terri Caughey's grandson Damien, or Ronald and Marjorie Girard's son Skyler, or Tammy Wallwork's son Phillip, or Stacey Kirkland's son Nicholas—all in the same position, all waiting for the government to recognize where the real priorities ought to be.

Speaker, I get calls and calls and communication from people who need assistance. They're not concerned about the power that the NDP and the Liberals are looking to broker with, with this coalition government.

Let me read you a little story from Casey Morden: "I am a local truck mechanic. I just finished paying my College of Trades 'membership fee.' Personally I find this to be a total scam, for the lack of a better word. I would like to hear your opinion on this issue. I personally don't understand how this group"—the College of Trades—"thinks making us pay triple the amount to keep our" trades "licence current will help the trades!"

He now knows what my opinion is, but there's nothing in this budget, nothing in this programming motion, that will help Casey Morden.

Yesterday, Speaker, I entered in a petition in this House under Lyme disease. Here is a message that I got from Alison Smith: "I just wanted to send you a quick note to thank you for creating the petition on Lyme disease. I live in Toronto and I have Lyme disease. It took five years to get diagnosed. The specialist I was seeing at the time confirmed the diagnosis through a blood test, but she told me that she couldn't"—could not—"treat me. She said that I needed to go to the US immediately because she and other Canadian" doctors "are at risk of losing their licence if they treat Lyme disease."

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): It's awful loud on the opposition side. Your poor member is trying to do his duty here, and I hear you louder than I hear him, and his voice does carry, so that's pretty scary. So, folks, if you want to have your little group sessions, you know there's a room in the back you can go to. Thank you very much.

Continue.

Mr. Randy Hillier: Thank you, Speaker. I'll try to elevate my voice as well, just in case.

These are just some examples, as I said, that I'm sure every member in this House gets correspondence on. But what are we doing about it? Really, truly, what are we doing? What is this budget and what is this programming motion doing for them? We know what the answer is. The answer is: nothing. Nothing.

We've got a few parties here that are seeking power and not seeking to assist, to help, to prevent injustice. They're just seeking power for themselves.

Here's a constituent from Cloyne—another one of these hydro ones—a small business in Cloyne. Cloyne is just a little village on Highway 41 in my riding. This is from Maureen Marlin: "I am a new business owner in Cloyne, On. Due to the delivery charges my hydro bill is more than the mortgage on my property"

And what about the WSIB, a long-standing problem? There have been protests here at Queen's Park, and what are they doing?

Here's one from Paul Grenier: "Wow, I stumbled on this site today while doing some research. I work for an insurance company and we have been speaking to a number of contractors about how these" WSIB "changes are affecting" their lives and "their business."

"The initial premium burden is bad enough but what we feel is the real risk to business owners will really surface once a claim must go in. It's no secret that WSIB ... are fishing for" more "money."

I've spoken to the Minister of Labour on the WSIB. I've spoken with the three previous ministers of labour on the WSIB, and still nothing but the hardship and burden that comes out of the Liberal government, and now a Liberal government that appears to have the blessings of people who used to stand up for the little guy. The little guy has been lost in these actions in the House.

I think we need to take a look at government priorities, and before we prop them up, we ought to make sure they are doing a good job and motivate and encourage government to prevent those injustices and assist those people who are not getting the services and the aid that are the responsibility of government.

I'll just maybe end with this: In my riding, in the little town of Bath, we have a brand new gas-fired electricity generating station being built. They're building it on what used to be OPG land at the existing OPG Lennox generating station. The Lennox generating station operates at 5% capacity. It is a 2,000-megawatt generating station that sits idle 95% of the time. But we're going to spend another billion dollars to build a generating station right beside an existing one that does nothing.

At the same time, when you're at the Lennox Generating Station, look directly south into Lake Ontario and you'll see a beautiful island there called Amherst Island. Amherst Island is now going to have upwards of 40 industrial wind turbines. There's a big sign on Amherst Island as you get off the ferry there that says: "Amherst Island Is Not a Willing Host." But where is Amherst Island in this programming motion? Where is the generating station in this programming motion?

1630

Speaker, I'm very, very disappointed that with all the evidence before us, there are some members on the opposition side of this House who do not feel that it is their role to oppose but to console and to cozy up and snuggle and cuddle and look for that little perk of power at the expense of the rest of the people in Ontario.

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

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: Indeed, it's always an honour and a privilege to rise in this House. Before I start to say what I was going to say, I just wanted to address a couple of points made by my friend from Lanark-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington. When I say "my friend," I mean it. We co-authored a bill—and it's a good bill—together. I know that he shouldn't have to answer for the sins of the fathers in his own party, but to set the historical record straight just a little, if he's talking about closure motions, Mike Harris and the Progressive Conservative Party of Ontario are the kings of closure motions, and were before his time. And if he speaks about energy, they also were the kings of privatizing our energy sources, hence the problems we live with today. So it's always best to check before you stand and speak in this House about what your party has done in the past—the not-so-distant past, at that.

But on to happier topics, and that's, first and foremost, the very reason we're here. When I was elected, lo, six and a half years ago, I was elected to come to this House by the good people of Parkdale-High Park—and not just for them, but for all the people of Ontario. And they asked me to come with a few specific instructions. They're not so specific as to be just for Parkdale-High Park. They truly are, I think, the wishes and desires of

most people in this province, and that is simple: to get something done, to actually accomplish something, to actually work with everyone here, because nobody here, I hope, wants a one-party state. What we want is an active democracy, where we actually debate—the give and take, the ebb and flow of ideas—where actually learn from each other, where we grow in this place to maybe expand our ideological horizons just a little bit, where we take into account the other person's views. That's the very essence, or should be, of any Parliament or parliamentary democracy. We were called to do that: to represent the people in our ridings and the people of Ontario by working together to actually accomplish something. We weren't elected to come here simply to stand on behalf of our parties and to defend our party.

In fact, if there's one thing I hear over and over and over again at the doors as I go out and canvass, it's this: Stop the partisan bickering and get something done, actually accomplish something. That's what we were sent here to do. This does not mean the same thing as giving up our principles. It's far from that. In fact, this is not—and I would be the first to say so, and so would we all in the New Democratic Party—a New Democratic Party budget. We have not morphed from Ontario into Sweden, into social democracy, into heaven. We have not done that with this budget. There's no question about that. What we have done here is to accomplish what people in Ontario sent us to do, and that is to move the markers forward on the files, to ask for some key symbolic actions from this government—quantifiable. And by the way, this programming motion makes it accountable as well for the first time, and this is a huge accomplishment, I have to say, with a financial accountability office and officer. This is a huge accomplishment that the New Democratic Party, under the leadership of Andrea Horwath, has gained.

It was interesting, because, of course, we made our initial asks and we negotiated for more than those initial asks, and we were met, by and large, by the government in response to those asks. But then we realized something, and that is this: Especially in light of the gas plant fiasco, particularly in light of Ornge, eHealth, Presto—I could go on—especially in light of almost \$3 billion wasted with nothing to show for it, we needed some way of not only getting the government to promise to act on some of these files but actually to make sure that they do. Not just “the cheque is in the mail”—but actually receive the cheque. That's what we did as an add-on to the initial ask.

It was fascinating. We heard from some of the mainstream media, “Why are you asking for even more? You've already made your asks. What do you want? How much more do you want?”

The reality is, we asked and we got. We worked, and we got results. Andrea Horwath led, and Kathleen Wynne listened and followed. That's what happened here with this budget. That's what happened. It's not a New Democratic Party budget. It's a Liberal budget with New Democratic Party asks embedded in it.

By the way, what did I hear from my constituents during this process? Over and over and over again, I heard this: “Work with them. Get what you can. We don't want an election.” I defy any member here, including members of the Progressive Conservative Party, to say their constituents said, “Go to the polls. We want to spend another \$92 million. Yes, we do. We want to go to the polls,” only to come back to the same possible results.

That is not financially prudent action, and neither is it financially prudent to walk away from the negotiating table without even looking at what is in the budget, without even having a say as to what might be in the budget. All of us, I think, in our previous lives and whatever work we did and whatever life we led before we were elected here, had to engage in negotiations at some point. Quite frankly, I have never, ever heard of a negotiating process that's productive where one party simply refuses to engage. That's not the way negotiation works. That's not what our electorate sent us here to do. Our electorate sent us here, again, to get something done, to get something accomplished for them.

Had the New Democratic Party not engaged in this budget process, had we had a two-party state here and it had been up to the Progressive Conservatives, we would have surely had a far worse budget than we achieved. It would have certainly only been a Liberal budget; it would not have been a Progressive Conservative budget. It would only have been a Liberal budget, only reflective of Liberal Party needs, and we know what that looks like. We've seen the gas plants. We've seen Ornge. We've seen eHealth. We've seen Presto. We've seen what the Liberal Party does when it is unfettered.

We are here, as opposition members, to work with them, to negotiate and to hold them to account; not to walk away and let them do whatever they want. Is that what my neighbours figuratively and literally to the right really propose? That isn't progressive. That's not even conservative. That's not doing our due diligence—our elected due diligence.

By the way, in terms of holding the Liberal Party to account, were we to go to an election—committees out the window. All of those committees that are now engaged in looking into the Ornge scandal, looking into the chemotherapy scandal, looking into the gas plant scandal—all of those committees gone, no accountability for this government even there.

Is it not our due diligence, as opposition members, to hold this government to account? I would warrant, Mr. Speaker, yes, it is. That is our due diligence. By not engaging and by walking away, we don't do that. In fact, the very model of walking away this government exhibited with their prorogation. What the Conservative Party has done is essentially the same thing: walk away, do not engage, take your toys and go home. That's not democracy and that's not what we were elected to do. I can tell you that, with a programming motion and with the extra asks—which everybody said, “Oh, why are you doing it? Why are you doing it?” With the extra asks, we got even more accountability. That's what we got.

1640

Also, on the transit file—because there's been such misinformation on the transit file. The only thing this government put forward, by the way, despite the spin—there has been no actual action taken by this government on the transit file, except one, I hearken back, and that was to take \$4 billion out of Transit City, effectively killing Transit City. That, this government did, and it did it while the current Premier acted as transportation minister. That's when that happened, setting up the reign of Rob Ford and setting up the current debacle of transportation which is our fate in the GTHA. That's what this government did—the only action they've done, by the way, in the last small while.

Now we hear a lot of spin about what they might, could, possibly would do—and oh, by the way, they're just consulting—but we did hear some frightening words. The frightening words were around those toll lanes. I'll tell you why they're frightening: because it doesn't work, because the evidence shows that it doesn't work. It costs at least \$300 million to put into place. It will generate about \$25 million each year. In what way does that add to transportation in the GTHA? That's, again, why we need the financial accountability officer to look at what's fact and what's spin, to look at promises made versus promises actually delivered.

So let's look at what we got, because today, in a happy moment, we celebrated. We New Democrats, we came together and we celebrated. We had cake, even. The press came, and we said, "Here is what we have accomplished. With Andrea Horwath leading, and Kathleen Wynne listening and following, here's what we have accomplished for Ontarians." We have accomplished what we set out to—by listening to them, by the way—and consulting with thousands of Ontarians who asked for significant actions on significant files.

What were they? We asked that poverty be at least slightly alleviated. I listened to my friend from Lanark-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington, and I heard his litany of woes about what it's like to live in Ontario. Actually, I agree with most of them.

Ms. Cindy Forster: They did it.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: Oh, I agree. Yes, it was, in part, set up by his own government, but it hasn't been alleviated much by this.

I said in a response to one of the ministers yesterday that those people who are on ODSP, on Ontario disability, are actually making about 18% less than they did in 1993. That's the reality on the ground. It's no fun to be poor in Ontario, but what did we hear? "Get something done." We heard this from anti-poverty activists and those with lived experience as well: "Please get something—anything—done," because this was a government that was adding to the poverty burden. It wasn't alleviating it, so they said, "Get something done." We got something done on that file.

What else did we do? Auto insurance—we heard from our constituency that with the auto insurance companies making an extra \$2 billion in profits while cutting

disability benefits and upping rates, something had to be done. We listened and we acted. We asked for a 15% decrease. Of course, here's where the financial accountability officer in this programming motion is so critical. What did we find, and what have we been asking about in question period lately? Rates are going up. What's that about? My goodness, that's why we need the financial accountability office, which, by the way, to my friends to the right, is simply the mirror image of what is already in existence in Ottawa. That's in Ottawa; we want it here, and we need it here. My goodness. Yes, we need action on the auto insurance file.

What else do we need? We need action on the long-term-care file. Oh, it's terrible in long-term care. We know how awful it is. We hear questions about it. We've been living with the reality of it. We need a guarantee that people can get into long-term care, and we need that five-day guarantee on home care and long-term care—and we got it.

What else do we need? We need—and this is paramount—a look at how much money is flowing from this place to large, multinational corporations. Another \$1.3 billion is about to flow that way—\$1.3 billion that could go to transit, \$1.3 billion that could go—pick a file—to anti-poverty measures, \$1.3 billion that could go to housing, \$1.3 billion that could go to any number of files. No, no, Mr. Speaker, it's not going to go to where it's needed.

In fact, cabinet ministers have been standing up and proudly saying we spend less on social services than any other province, per capita. That's not something to be proud about. We should be ashamed of that. We should be ashamed that we spend less per student in post-secondary education than any other province. That's shameful. That's not something to be proud about. That \$1.3 billion could go to that.

Not only that; now they're making noises about ratcheting back the surtax on incomes over \$500,000. We gained that in the last budget. It was a significant gain, supported by 78% of all Ontarians, and they're talking about getting rid of it. That's shameful. That can't happen. Hence, we need again the financial accountability officer. We need that.

Finally, we need action on youth and jobs. Oh, my goodness. We have lost hundreds of thousands of good, union, manufacturing jobs in this province—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member for Chatham-Kent-Essex might want to get in his seat.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: We have lost futures for our young. We need action. We saw some movement on that. We got some movement on that.

So here we are. Here we are. What did we do? We did what I was elected to do, what we were all elected to do: get something concrete done for the members of our constituencies and the constituents of this province. That's what we were asked to do. Had we done nothing, we would have gained nothing. Had we walked away from the table, like in any other negotiation, we would have won nothing. Had we immediately pulled the plug

and gone to an election, we would have spent \$92 million, come back with very, very possibly the same results—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Perth–Wellington, covering your face doesn't work.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: —and lost the ability to hold this government to account. We would have lost the ability to hold this government to account, not gained it, because we would have lost the committees looking into Ornge, looking into the movement of the gas plants, looking into the chemotherapy scandal. We would have lost that ability as well.

So, in fact, contrary to what I've heard to my right, what we've done by actively working hard and engaging with this government—not because we expected to get our own budget, but because we expected to get something for the people of Ontario, and that is exactly what we have done.

I must say, in only about a year and a half, it is significant what the New Democratic Party, under the leadership of Andrea Horwath, has accomplished for the people of Ontario. They get it, they hear it and they know it. When I go out and knock on doors, I don't say, "Guess what I achieved for you this term? Nothing." I say, "Here is what we achieved for you this term. Look at the accomplishments."

Again, enough? Never enough, Mr. Speaker. Not enough—there's so much more to do—but something. Whereas my friends to the right here, when they knock on doors, what are they going to say? "Guess what we've accomplished for you?" A lot of Sturm und Drang, as Shakespeare would say, signifying nothing. That's what they've accomplished.

Just to wrap up—I only have about a minute left—here is what we've done: With Andrea Horwath leading, Kathleen Wynne listening and following, we have accomplished what we set out to do, what we could do. We have done something concrete for the people who elected us here in the first place, and we will continue to do that. We're not shy about it. We will continue to negotiate. We will continue to press. We will continue to hold the Liberal government to account, which we would have lost entirely had we gone into election mode without thinking through the consequences.

1650

Our people have elected us to be thoughtful. Our people have elected us to be prudent. Our people have elected us to be practical. Our people have elected us, finally, like I said in the very beginning, to get something done. That's the mature way. That's the adult way. That's the New Democratic Party way.

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

Mr. John Yakabuski: I listened attentively to the member from Parkdale–High Park as she addressed this assembly over the past 20 minutes. This may come as a shock to her and maybe to some other members of the assembly: I disagree with much of what she just said.

Ms. Cindy Forster: No.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Yes, particularly those parts about the Tories.

I want to talk about the motion that is before this House right now. One thing that I'm disappointed in, that dismays me greatly, is the abandonment of the principles that the New Democratic Party used to hold fast to. I don't know how many times I've been in this assembly where they have railed on incessantly about how wrong time allocation and closure are to debate in this assembly.

Ms. Catherine Fife: Check your own history, Yak.

Mr. John Yakabuski: It's not about us, I say to the member from Kitchener. It's about your principles and something you have called sacred, and that is the right to debate in this assembly and, Speaker—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Before you get right into it, may I suggest that we cut the dialogue with each other. This is what I'm here for. I'm feeling left out, okay? So let's direct it to me.

Mr. John Yakabuski: I will endeavour to include you in everything, Mr. Speaker. I will put some cotton batting in my left ear so I don't hear too much from the left side.

The NDP are going on and on about this financial accountability office, which is part of the deal to stifle debate on the budget, which essentially is what we should be talking about right now, and I will get to that in a moment.

But I want to talk about this financial accountability office. This is sort of the cherry on top of the cake that has cemented the marriage between the NDP and the Liberals, the consummation, if you want call it that.

Mr. Robert Bailey: What about the annulment?

Mr. John Yakabuski: I don't think we can go for an annulment. They're going to have to file for divorce if they're not happy.

But there are so many things to talk about and so little time—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Sarnia–Lambton might want to get in his seat.

Mr. John Yakabuski: —and I want to make sure that I'm speaking through you, the Chair, in this debate.

I have to put on my glasses here—

Mr. Robert Bailey: Your cheaters.

Mr. John Yakabuski: —my cheaters, to help me a little bit with reading this.

Here's the mandate for the financial accountability office:

"Provide the Legislative Assembly of Ontario with independent analysis of the state of the province's finances and trends in the provincial and national economies, including the budget; and

"at the request of a committee or member of the assembly shall:

"(a) undertake research into the province's finances and trends in the provincial and national economies; and

"(b) undertake research into the estimates and all legislation of the government and opposition members; and

"(c) undertake research to estimate the financial cost of any proposal that would impact the province's fi-

nances and that relates to a matter over which the Legislature has jurisdiction, including government agencies and ministries....”

Speaker, a lot of research, but I didn’t hear anything about power, teeth and authority. There is nothing. This is what we’ve been sold down the river on as members of this assembly and shut out of this debate, I might add, Mr. Speaker, shut out of the debate on the budget by a deal between the third party, the New Democrats, and the governing Liberals. And this is the so-called crowning glory that they’ve sold us down the river on, this accountability office. Well, I’ll tell you, Mr. Speaker, there is nothing in there—is there anything in there that will prevent another hydro scandal? Absolutely not. This accountability office—can they stop what happened in September 2011 when the Premier stood up and says, “We’re shutting down that power plant project and we’re moving it down the road. We’re shutting it down and moving it down the road”? Absolutely nothing could be done by an accountability office to stop that. Zero.

The member for Parkdale–High Park says that an election would cost Ontario \$92 million. An election is going to come at some time. Thank God we have elections. It’s called democracy. So at some point we’re going to be thrust into an election. It looks like it’s not going to be this spring. The Liberals have been saved and the NDP have been saved as well, so we’re not going to have an election this spring.

There’s going to be one at some time. Ninety-two million dollars: I guess that’s the estimate we keep reading in the *Toronto Star*. Every time they write a story about the possibility of an election, they talk about the potential cost of \$92 million. One billion dollars—well, \$900 million was the potential cost, according to the Minister of Finance as he testified before the justice committee last week. Under oath, he testified that the government had already prepared for a potential cost of \$900 million to cancel and relocate the power plants in Oakville and Mississauga, relocate them to Sarnia and back—\$900 million.

How many hundreds of millions have been wasted with the scandal at Ornge and eHealth? Billions. We see new legislation coming forward with respect to electronic health records today. We haven’t seen the bill yet, but let’s just hope that it doesn’t result in another Liberal-orchestrated, friends-lining-their-pockets scandal like we saw at eHealth. Let’s hope that we don’t have a repetition of that.

We could have had an election that might have cost \$92 million. But I’ll tell you, if that election would have happened and the Conservatives were successful, we would have a judicial inquiry into what happened at Mississauga and Oakville. I can assure you, Mr. Speaker, with the power of a judicial inquiry and the ability for it to get to the bottom of every possible illegal, corrupt act that took place, we would make sure it wouldn’t happen again. But this accountability office is not going to do anything.

Look, accountability is something that—my God, nobody believes in it more than the Progressive Conserv-

atives. But it’s not just a word, it’s not just an office, and it’s not just another bureaucratic department being created. It’s a core belief; it is your way of life. If you believe in being accountable and in accountability, it’s the way you conduct business no matter what you’re doing. That is what would make the government and this Legislature answerable and responsible to the people of Ontario. An office in some ivory tower is not going to do it, but a commitment to the people in this chamber here—this is where the decisions are made. This is where laws are made. This accountability office will pass no legislation, will pass no regulation. This is where those acts take place. A guarantee and a commitment from the people who are elected here by the people in their home ridings, their constituents—that is what will change the mindset that has crippled this government over the past 10 years. It’s a belief clearly evidenced by its actions that they are not accountable to the people of Ontario; that they are accountable to the Liberal Party of Ontario.

1700

I want to go back to the budget itself, which is the reason that we’ve got this programming motion that is essentially denying the people of this Legislature the right to debate the budget itself, because when the budget bill comes forward the next time before this chamber, it is time-allocated. There will be two hours of debate. It will then go to committee. The committee will have two days of hearings, and it will then come back here for third reading—two days of debate, or there will be one day of amendments after committee—back here for debate, two hours of debate on third reading, and that’s it. That’s it for a spending plan of \$127 billion, with a deficit of \$11.7 billion.

Now, the NDP talk about what they accomplished in this budget. They’re very proud of what they accomplished.

Mr. Rob Leone: They had a party.

Mr. John Yakabuski: I’m sure they did have a party. They’ll probably have another one next week.

We went from a budget deficit of \$9.8 billion, at a time when we were supposed to be attacking and reducing the deficit—that was the commitment of this party, that the fiscal shape of the province was priority number one. Tackling the debt and the deficit was priority number one, so what did they accomplish with their deal with the NDP and the Andrea-Horwath-authored budget? Well, they’ve increased the deficit by \$1.9 billion, and that’s cause for celebration for the folks in the third party. They’re celebrating that they’ve increased the debt and deficit by that amount.

Ontario is on a train wreck of a ride if it doesn’t get its fiscal house in order. You cannot reduce the debt and you cannot eliminate the debt if you don’t at first eliminate your annual deficits. It’s not complicated; it’s pretty simple. If you continue to run massive deficits, which will be cumulatively added to the debt every year, do you know what we guarantee? We guarantee a very poor standard of living, relative to the one we have ourselves today, to our children, grandchildren and great-grand-

children going forward. If we do not have the fortitude, the wherewithal and the strength to make the decisions today to eliminate the deficit and thereby attempt to attack the debt, we simply are saying to our children, grandchildren and so on that your standard of living is going to be poorer than ours was.

Why? Well, already we're spending \$11 billion a year to service the debt—\$11 billion. There are only two ministries in this province that have a bigger budget than that: the health ministry and the education ministry. No other ministry comes close to the debt-servicing costs of this province. If interest rates change, and even on the track that this government projects—and we do not believe for a minute that they're going to stay on the track that they project, because next year, what kind of a deal are they going to have to make with the New Democrats to avoid an election at budget time? How much is it going to cost the people of Ontario to avoid that \$92-million election next year? Well, this year it cost over a billion, and more to come. Ninety-two million; a billion—that's a thousand million, for those folks out there listening.

What's the deal going to cost next year for this tired, old, corrupt government to survive? What is the deal going to cost my children, my grandchildren? I speak for everybody across this province when I say that. I'm not speaking individually or personally. I'm talking about everyone out there. What is that deal going to cost the young folks next year? At some point, the piper has to be paid. We cannot kick the can down the road year after year after year, hoping that by some miracle, a massive economic tsunami comes through and turns this economy around, just by accident, and the government just happens to be the recipient of good fortune.

That's like the person, Mr. Speaker, whose retirement plan consists of going out every Friday and buying tickets for the Lotto Max, hoping that one of those Friday nights they'll strike it rich and they'll be set for life. That's pretty poor planning.

That's what this government is hoping for: that by some stroke of good fortune, things turn around in Ontario in spite of their actions driving it the other way. They're driving this province down by increasing the deficit and increasing the debt. They're hoping that some outside force, some benevolent force from the heavens perhaps, turns this province around in spite of their actions. We know, as Progressive Conservatives, that that will not happen and they will not do the necessary things to turn it around. They will not do the necessary things to turn it around because they don't have the political will and they don't have the intestinal fortitude to actually say, "We've got to change."

So what did they do? They went to the New Democrats, who also do not want to go to the people, and they said, "What is it going to take for us to survive? How much extra spending will we have to inject into this budget to keep this government alive?" The New Democrats—I don't agree, obviously, with the way they would govern this province, but I do accept that they were made

an offer—came back and said, "These are the six or seven things that we're going to require in the budget."

Well, Kathleen Wynne and Charles Sousa looked at the numbers and said, "My God, we're in a mess in this province, but it would be a shame for the Liberals to lose power. We believe we have the divine right to hold on to power in this province. So, Andrea, your proposals are going to cost about an extra billion dollars." Fair enough. But you would think that they would at least look into their finances and say, "Okay, we've got to give the NDP a billion dollars in spending. Let's find a billion dollars in savings. Let's find where we can cut spending so that the deficit doesn't go higher." But no, they didn't have the will to do that. No, the deficit goes from \$9.8 billion to \$11.7 billion, up \$1.9 billion.

And now, coming down the road—or, I should say, the tracks or the tunnels or whatever you want to call it—is their Metrolinx plan, and their Metrolinx plan is going to tax everybody across this province. I say to the member for Glengarry–Prescott–Russell, I hope you have a good time trying to sell that plan up in eastern Ontario, about taxing your farmers and your rural people up there so that they can pay for your Metrolinx mess down here in Toronto.

1710

Mr. Robert Bailey: That dog won't hunt.

Mr. John Yakabuski: That dog will not hunt. But that's their plan, where everybody is going to pay for the fact that they've messed it up here in the transit plan in Toronto.

As Frank Klees has said, we need a select committee to look into where we can find and cut government waste. When you're spending \$127 billion a year, if you believe for a minute there isn't waste then you're living on a different planet than the rest of us are. There's tons of waste in that budget. It's up to us to find it. It's up to the government to appoint a select committee so that we can get to the bottom of waste in this province so maybe, down the road, instead of having \$11.7-billion deficits, we can finally start to balance the budget and attack the debt, which is an albatross around the neck of every young person in this province.

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

Mr. Rob Leone: I'm pleased to join the debate. I'm not quite sure how I'm going to follow the theatrics of my friend from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke, who not only eloquently states his point, but does it with such gusto that it's very hard to replicate in this House. I truly appreciate the comments that he has made in this debate.

I want to perhaps take a little step back and talk about some of the things that I learned as a young academic prior to entering this place. I recall actually writing a paper—my very first paper, actually, that I presented at a conference. I want to talk a bit about that because I was several years younger at the time, had a lot more hair and I'm pretty sure that I was trying to look like I was wise, even though I was terrified presenting a paper at my very first conference. It was at McGill University in Montreal.

It was for the association of Australian and New Zealand studies of North America, otherwise known as ANZSANA.

The theme of the paper was to assess the relationship between accountability, transparency and democracy. I find that the subject of that paper actually fits the kind of discussion that we are having here today. Because at the end of the day we're trying to find the optimal level of that relationship so that accountability and transparency are being used to enhance democracy and to enhance the working function of a Legislature.

Now, I think that obviously accountability and transparency are central to what we do as legislators. Obviously, as opposition MPPs, our chief role is to hold this government to account—I think we do that each and every day we're here—and also, at the same time, propose the kinds of alternatives that we think are prudent and necessary to bring this province to a place we think it needs to be, which is certainly a change in direction from the path that we're currently on.

In the paper where I talked about the optimal level of accountability and transparency and how it relates to democracy, I remember—unfortunately I wasn't able to grab a copy before I could come to the House today but I do remember the gist of the content of the theory that I presented and the model that I presented such that accountability and transparency can and certainly do enhance a functioning democracy, but that it could sometimes go too far as well.

We, as legislators, come to this place and, on the floor of the Legislature, we debate things. We debate a variety of things. Sometimes we agree and sometimes we disagree, and such is the nature of what we do here. We debate the difference of what we think is right and what we think is wrong. Sometimes we view the same thing differently, depending on our outlook, depending on our ideology, depending on the party that we support and our outlook. That's an important thing, to have those debates, to have this difference of opinion and to talk about different things in a manner that is cogent, that is intelligent. That we can come to this place and speak our minds, I think, is a bedrock principle of our parliamentary traditions that we should never lose sight of. But sometimes we get into a situation where we see that accountability and transparency can be skewing the balance away from what we consider democracy, and sometimes we can see instances where officers of the Legislature or officers of Parliament become the overseers of what we do here. At the end of the day, they'll report, they'll see a situation, and they'll determine that a situation is either right or wrong. And that process of that one person saying something is right or something is wrong becomes the gospel of what we do here, and therefore it can't be contradicted in any way, shape or form.

Now, that becomes a problem, Mr. Speaker, because certainly if you were the sole determiner of what was right and what was wrong in this Legislature—I'm sure you would like that, because you see things in a particular way, but it might not jive so well with me, with all

due respect, Mr. Speaker, because I have different ideas and different beliefs that sometimes don't correspond with the way you see things.

If we start to diminish our debate and we start to remove that debate away from the floor of this Legislature and into a back office of some particular officer of the Legislature and we continue to do this more and more, what we effectively do is we diminish ourselves. We diminish our role as people who are responsible for holding this government to account. I fear for the moment where we rely too much on these mechanisms that negate our own role to perform the functions that we are tasked to do by the people of the province of Ontario, who elected us to represent them in this Legislature. That means that we can have a debate about different things and disagree and agree on different things, depending on the situation that may arise.

So there is an optimal point, and the more we talk about diminishing our role, hiving off our responsibility to hold this government to account, we are effectively, I think, diminishing the role of the opposition in the Legislature. And that role shouldn't be diminished; it should be enhanced. We should have the tools in place to make sure that we're doing the job that we are tasked to do, that the people elected us to do, which is to hold this government to account.

I see that in this programming motion, we see right away stuck in this programming motion a desire to set up a financial accountability office, which, again, is an office that certainly can potentially have a role to play in our Legislature, but it may be tipping the balance. We have an opportunity here to discuss and to debate different things, but in essence, we don't have enough time to debate something very important, very essential to our democracy, such as this, and to potentially debate the effect that this might have on our role as members of the opposition, and potentially I'm sure the government would want to obviously talk about how it affects their ability to govern, if it does. I think this is something that has to be debated much more fully, much more completely, and certainly longer than the 20 minutes that we may have allotted to each individual MPP, and certainly many, many members may not want to participate in this motion of substantive debate, and I think that is truly, truly unfortunate, because we're debating something so profound that it can effectively diminish the democracy that we have and the role of MPPs to hold this government to account.

The very moment we start saying that one person can have control of what is in the public interest, what is right or what is wrong, is the very moment we start to lose our democracy, and I can't for the life of me accept that we would continue to do this on a daily basis without the fullness of debate, without the fullness of understanding the pros and the cons, without understanding the consequences, both positive and negative, to this place and to our role as legislators.

I wanted to take part in this debate today to put forward this idea that we have to actually think about

these things, not simply as a backroom deal between the government House leader and the House leader of the third party, but to actually talk about these things that have such profound importance to what we do in this Legislature.

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Now, I note, Mr. Speaker, that we have proposed an amendment to this motion and a sub-amendment to this motion as well. That's important to note, because I know the sub-amendment in particular talks about one of my favourite things to talk about, which is prorogation and what happens to this motion and to the amendment to this motion in the event of prorogation.

I find it very interesting that the sub-amendment put forth by my friend from Lanark-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington had dealt with prorogation, because I realize that my friends in the New Democratic Party worked very hard over the months of November, December, January, part of February and I forgot part of October as well, when the Legislature was shut down for 129 days. I know they travelled the province to talk about prorogation as being some evil thing—shutting the doors of the Legislature; shutting us out from talking about the future of the province of Ontario. And yet here they are, about to support a motion that vindicates, in many ways, the very government that shut this place down for such a long time. Now, I don't know, Mr. Speaker, about how people wake up in the morning and look at themselves in the mirror and wonder whether they have the principles by which they were elected or whether they have somehow sold those principles out on the basis of looking at something as profound as prorogation.

I heard them complain over and over and over again about how poorly the government handled this file because it was running away from its responsibility to answer questions, very important questions, that we had here in the province of Ontario, particularly with reference to the cancellations of the Oakville and Mississauga power plants, cancellations that cost a billion dollars of our hard-earned money. When we go into our ridings, we hear this all the time: "I work hard, I pay my bills. I volunteer in the community, and every time I turn around the government seems to be wasting the very money I'm sending it." This has a profound sense of anger in people when they think about the implications of that.

Unfortunately, I heard from the member from Parkdale-High Park today that not only have they agreed to vote for the budget but they actually had a celebration. They had cake. They invited the press. They decided to have a little bit of a party to celebrate propping up this scandal-plagued government. Now, I don't know how the people of Cambridge will take that piece of news, that the party of—the self-professed party of the little guy is now propping up the scandals of the Liberal Party.

I think that I come with a sense of—I'm troubled by the very notion, the very idea, that there would be cake and champagne, taking part of a—

Ms. Cindy Forster: No alcohol.

Mr. Rob Leone: No alcohol. Well, that's unfortunate. Maybe the champagne will be cracked next week when

the budget actually passes, because there's real cause for celebration, that people are out not just \$1 billion but another billion dollars just to save their party, to keep them in power. That's very unfortunate.

I think what people in Ontario want us to do is they want us to be able to offer them a sense of hope. That, ultimately, is I think what we do on a daily basis. I, as many people know in this Legislature, am a new dad, once again. It's very important to understand that we should be setting up our future generation to the best of our ability. I know that on the day he was born, he was straddled with his portion of the provincial debt, which was far in excess of \$20,000. That's slapped on his back before he takes his first breath, his first feeding, his first burp, his first diaper change, and here we are in the province of Ontario that's not doing anything with this budget to reduce that burden on my kids. In fact, it's doing quite the opposite. We're now going to have an extra \$2-billion deficit next year.

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Timmins-James Bay might want to get in his seat.

Mr. Rob Leone: The public debt in the province of Ontario is going to go up \$24 billion more next year, which is just going to add more and more to the cost of servicing that debt. As the member from Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke rightly states, \$11 billion each year is being poured into servicing that debt—simply paying the interest payments.

Next year at this time, we're going to have \$24 billion more added to that public debt. That means that the interest we're going to be paying to service that debt is only going to go higher. That's notwithstanding a potential credit downgrade. If we followed the comments the former finance minister, Dwight Duncan, made yesterday, when asked what he thought the credit rating agencies would say about that government's budget, he said the credit rating agencies are going to have some harsh words for this budget. That is pretty interesting, because at the end of the day, what that will mean, if we have another credit downgrade, is that interest rates to service that debt are only going to go higher.

The potential is quite easy to see. We could be out another half a billion dollars—maybe another billion dollars—next year at this time, simply to service a ballooning debt that this government will not take under control. All that's going to be done in this Legislature when this budget passes—I'm pretty sure it's going to pass, because the third party has decided that they're going to support it. But who wears that decision to put our children further in the hole? Who owns that decision? Well, certainly the Liberal Party does. It's their government; it's their budget. But so too does the NDP, and they have to make sure they understand the full ramifications of the decisions that are being made here in the province of Ontario on the basis of doing that.

The deficit is going to go up \$2 billion next year—a budget that the NDP has decided to vote for—and the debt is going to go up \$24 billion. I fail to see how any of

that is going to help the children of this province learn and prosper, when more and more of the money we send in the form of taxation to this government is being spent on servicing debt rather than on core social programs that we both need and want.

I hope that we start thinking quite clearly about the kinds of changes we need to be making, at the end of the day, to provide that kind of hope to our future generations, to provide hope to even young people who are going through our schools today, who obviously are graduating with a good education, but they can't find jobs at the end of the day, and all the while, they have a mountain of debt that they have to pay off and no job that can do that for them.

This is the kind of thing that I think we've proposed. I know, as the PC critic for training, colleges and universities, that we've produced a number of white papers, one of which was on higher education and higher learning. We want to ensure we can transition our youth and get them that great education that leads them to a job at the end of the day. We have people without jobs and jobs without people in the province of Ontario, and that fundamentally has to change.

So, yes, we are in the process of not only holding this government to account, but we want to produce results for the people of Ontario as well. By doing that, we've come to the conclusion that the only way to get the kinds of results we need for our young people is to change the government that leads this province, to change the party in power; to have the people have the ultimate say. At the end of the day, this is a democracy.

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I've heard the comment over and over again that elections cost \$92 million. Well, if you're against the spending of \$92 million, you're against the very democracy that elected you to this Legislature. You cannot say and use this as an argument and be supposedly supporting the very democracy that we're in today. Some \$92 million is the cost of doing business in the province of Ontario when it comes to elections.

It's not an easy thing to continue to push forward for an election. Certainly, it's been a difficult thing because no one really wants an election. But at the end of the day, we've come to the conclusion that the people of Ontario need an election. They need to have an opportunity to have a decision on who is best able to lead this province to prosperity. And we're not seeing that right now. In fact, we're seeing quite the opposite.

So at the end of the day, let's put the people in charge, like it's supposed to be. Let's have an election and let's get this sorted out.

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

Mr. Bill Walker: A couple of days ago or last week, the leader of the third party, Andrea Horwath, stood in this House and made a comment: "You know what you're going to expect from the Liberals," and that's partly why they're going to vote for this budget.

I would suggest to you, Mr. Speaker, that they do know what they're going to get. They're going to get an

Ornge scandal that wasted almost \$1 billion; they're going to get gas plants that are at least going to be \$1 billion; they've got the Green Energy Act that is putting up wind turbines in unwilling host communities and adding energy to a province that doesn't need it and wasting many, many dollars there. They've doubled the energy rates during their nine-year term. That's what you're going to get from the Liberals.

They've decimated the horse racing industry: 30,000 to 60,000 jobs in the province of Ontario wiped out because of them. The Ontario Tire Stewardship: exorbitant prices, up to 2,000% increases to agricultural producers and our small contractors across this province for no reason other than their poor mismanagement.

WSIB rates are increasing and just infuriating people; they had a good system before. The College of Trades: Fees are going to go from \$60 for three years to \$120 plus HST per year, and for what? That's not going to create one more job. The apprenticeship ratios: We want to bring them down so that our young people have an opportunity to work in this province in the skilled trades. We see the looming need coming, and they voted against us.

The Green Energy Act: We've had four private members' bills here to say we don't need the power, we don't need to do this right now, put a moratorium, and the NDP has propped them up on those types of things.

So, yes, they do know what they're getting with the Liberals, and I can't comprehend that they're that proud to stand up and vote with them for this budget.

Speaker, it's an interesting thing. A Prosperous and Fair Ontario is the title of this budget. The third-largest government ministry would be paying off the debt, if it was a ministry, behind health and education.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Paying off? Just servicing.

Mr. Bill Walker: Just servicing; you're right, Mr. Yakabuski. They're going to run an \$11.9-billion deficit this year, after last year's deficit. Again, it's cumulative. They've doubled the debt for this province in their eight years—the rest of the history of this great province—the debt has been doubled under their tenure, and yet we have a party that is prepared to support them, that being the NDP prop-up party. It's ridiculous.

I want to talk a little bit about these billion-dollar boondoggles this government is being rewarded—they're being rewarded by the NDP for this poor behaviour. Just think how many hospitals are not being built, like the Markdale Hospital in my great riding of Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound, because they don't have the money because they have such a large deficit. Just think how many schools are going to close—three in my riding. Derby, Sauble and Hepworth are all on the chopping block because there's no money left for those schools in rural Ontario because they again have wasted and over-spent by millions and millions and millions of dollars.

How many affordable homes—we've had the housing co-operative here at least two to three times, just in my short tenure, and we keep saying we can't do anything to help them because there's not enough money.

We cannot continue to waste and then reward people who are overspending and wasteful. How many people with mental challenges could we have helped? They come to my office and they plead their case and they say, "I need help. I need some kind of help out there," and we have to turn them back because there's no more money in the budget of this Liberal government because they have overspent and wasted billions of dollars.

How many people could have received dental services? There are people out there who can't even have a dental exam because there isn't enough money in the system, and yet we can do this and we can waste \$900 million on a gas plant to save two seats.

How many people could have received an eye exam who are going without? That's a preventive one again. If your eyesight is not detected early, that can lead to significant things down the road that are going to cost our health care system five, 10, 20 times, some predict, because we're not there in a proactive sense. The only reason, I can say, is because the current Liberal government has mismanaged those funds and has wasted so much money that it's not there. They have backed themselves into this corner. They have nobody else to look in the eye except themselves, and they should be saying sorry to the people of Ontario.

How many people are requiring social services? Community Living comes to me almost on a weekly basis saying there's not enough. We have Keystone services in our community that have not had an increase in 20 years, and those people are going without because there's no more money in the budget, in the coffers of the Liberal government, but yet they're spending that type of money.

Speaker, it just boggles my mind that we're spending \$1.9 million per hour just to service the interest on our debt. Just think of what that could do for new jobs for those people sitting in front of you. What type of a future are we leaving for them, if we continue to go down this path? This budget is nothing more than a reflection and a reiteration of what the Dalton McGuinty government was doing. Kathleen Wynne has tried to put a different spin. She's a little nicer with her smile. She spins the rhetoric a little differently. But you know what? It's the same old, same old: We're overspending, we're running deficits, and we're saying everything in the world is rosy. Well, everything in the world is not rosy.

Speaker, Metrolinx came out with a report, and now what the Liberal-NDP coalition is saying is, "We're going to add more taxes because we need more money." They've had absolute record revenues in their last number of years in office, and yet they've overspent and continue to run a deficit. Now they want to go back to the people and say, "Just get out more of your hard-earned money to cover up our mistakes."

They're trying to spin it that you're going to get better services. Well, I would suggest to you, before you ever come and ask someone for more services and more money for those services, that you look at the waste and the overspending. You have to be able to find the kind of

money that they're talking about for these services in the existing budget, if they just had the will and the conviction to do so. They're taking the easy route. They're trying to cover it over with rose-coloured glasses and make people think that everything is just wonderful and rosy out there.

The member from, I believe it was East York, today—sorry, Parkdale-High Park—talked today about how they want to get something, so they did this little horse trading system that they thought was good. They spun it to the public as if they're working hard for the people. I would suggest to you, Speaker, that that's hypocritical and they've sold out the people they purport to support, because with all of that reward for these bad actions in the past, people out there are going without: people without social housing, people without eye exams, people without dental exams—they're going without because this government is prepared.

They call them corrupt. We call the Libs corrupt, then they prop them up in the afternoon. How can they do that? How can they turn to their supporters? If they were to be asked straight up, "How can you support this government after all of those things I just listed that have detrimentally impacted the people of Ontario, those people going without?"—and they continue to turn around and say, "We want to reward them." They had a party. They want to reward them for an \$11.9-billion deficit. It's ludicrous. There's absolutely no way that you should be having a party. They should have been turning around and saying, "What can we do, as members of the third party opposition, to challenge them?"

That's part of our job, to be here and make sure we hold the current government to account. We're not going to side with them just so we can keep our seats and so that we can go out to our people and pretend to have made a difference in their lives. We're truly going to stand up and say, "This is the wrong direction."

There is a better way. There's a much better way. We need to ensure that we are giving these young people in front of you and those listening at home—children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren—an opportunity of the province that we have lived in. We used to be the leader of Confederation in Ontario. We were the proudest province and we were the leader, and now we're the laggards. We have our hands out for transfer payments. That, to me, is not acceptable. We need to ensure that we do that.

I realize that there are certainly different philosophies in here, and the NDP seem to always want to say that we're just the bad guys and we're going to cut and slash. That's not the reality. But as I teach my children, and I think I do my due diligence, you have to live within your means. You cannot continually overspend more than you bring in in revenues and expect to have anything at the end of the day. That's not something that I will ever teach my children. I will also never teach my children—and I should mention that my children, Zach and Ben, are at home, hopefully watching this. They need to understand accountability. All of us make decisions, and at the

end of the day, you have to be accountable. You have to accept the consequences for your decisions.

My job here is to make decisions on behalf of all of the people of Ontario, particularly the great people of Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound, so that we have a future that we’re going to be proud of and we look forward to with hope, not one that we’re going to sit down and let things—the last time, in the budget, a year ago now, if I recall, the NDP actually sat on their hands. They figured that that was their way of showing what they were doing for their people.

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This time, to give them credit, they’ve at least jumped off the fence. They’ve said, “We’re going to support it.” I don’t applaud them for that decision, but at least they got off their hands and they’re actually taking a stand. It’s the wrong stand—and it’s great, because if there was just a money tree out there, like they seem to think there is, that would be an easy way for us to have done it. We would have made that simple, easy decision as well. But do you know what? Easy decisions aren’t what we’re sent here to do on behalf of our constituents. We’re sent here to do what we believe is the right thing for the long term, the short term and the medium term.

Right now, we have a government that continues to go down the track that is going to take us off the fiscal cliff, and it’s going to bankrupt us. We’ve already heard it in this House many times. Our finance critic, Peter Shurman, has talked about if we get another downgrade, and the hugely negative impact that’s going to have on our province. If we do not have people who are willing to reinvest in Ontario—and at this point, with the highest energy rates and 500,000 to 600,000 people out of work every single day, how does anyone have confidence to come here?

This government across the aisle has doubled the energy rates. Why have we lost 300,000 manufacturing jobs? Part of it is because we have the highest energy rates, and are soon to have the highest energy rates in all of North America. I ask you, Speaker: What company is going to come to Ontario to locate, when they can go to one of the surrounding provinces who have much lower rates, who have much better opportunities and lower taxes through a lot of the things that they’re doing through the HST?

By the way, that government promised, “We will not implement an HST. We will not implement a health tax. We will not raise taxes.” I would suggest that in the next couple of days, we will probably hear, “We will not raise your revenue tools either.” We know that a revenue tool is nothing more than a tax. A tax is a tax is a tax. Metrolinx is nothing more than a tax to the people. They need to get their house in order.

Speaker, the other points that I want to make are very specific to democracy. Our province and our country are based on the fundamental principle of the people having the ability to say.

I would suggest to you that our government, after the last nine years, is going in the wrong direction. They’ve

doubled the debt. The deficit is going to be \$411 billion if they keep going. They say they’re going to eliminate it by 2017-18, but I don’t see how you can not reduce spending and continue to overspend and expect that you’re going to reduce this huge, \$230-billion deficit in the next three years. To me, it just doesn’t make sense. I’m not a mathematician, necessarily; obviously, they have no one in their caucus who is, either, or they wouldn’t have brought those numbers. I believe the Duke from Haldimand–Norfolk said that the other day. Their numbers just don’t add up. You can look at all of the tables and nice glossies that they put in here to try to purport, but if you just cut through it all and say, “How much money do we have? How much do we bring in? How much do we spend?”—at the end of the day, they spent \$11.9 billion more this year. They’re going to increase that again next year. Then, a short two years after that, they say that they’ll have a balanced budget. Well, I’m not certain how you’re going to do that. I fully believe that they can’t do that.

I want to get back to democracy. It’s a fundamental principle of this House that if the people lose confidence in the government, then it’s time for the people to have their say and make that choice. What we think should have happened here is to have had an election and let the people have a choice, because we believe there is a better way. We believe they’ve lost confidence due to the waste, the overspending, the deficit of \$11.9 billion, the corruption of the gas plants and the Ornge scandals—the boondoggles of those two alone should be enough for the great people of Ontario to say, “We’ve had enough of this direction. There is a better way.”

Certainly, with the NDP farm team jumping on and propping them up at every chance and rewarding that poor behaviour—although they do condemn them for all these misdeeds, but they’re still going to stand up and vote for them.

It is our opposition role to hold a government to account. Regardless of good times or bad times, our job is to hold them to account. We need to treat taxpayers’ money as if it’s the money of those children who are sitting in front of you, and every time we have the opportunity, we need to do that.

We need to ensure that every dollar that’s given by a hard-working taxpayer is spent with the greatest of care and respect, and that we get value at the other end, not just slough off \$900 million—without even an apology for about a month and a half, I might add. There was finally a “sorry” word said; I’m not certain that it was that sincere. At the end of the day, I think that what should have happened there is the Liberal Party actually should have stepped up, apologized and said, “We’re prepared to pay that back.” Let’s not forget that that decision on the gas plants was made by unelected campaign team officials. The Premier was around that table, and she needs to step up and do what’s right.

That’s what our job is: to hold them to account. We’ve caught them with their hand in the cookie jar. We’re not going to relent; we’re going to continue to look at that.

We're going to look every time we can now, because every time they stand up and say, "We're going to," and "It's good for you," how can we honestly believe that after all the things that we've seen in this House in the short 16 or 18 months that I've been here? It's just horrendous.

I continue to hear certain people from the third party say, "They're corrupt, Speaker. There are terrible, terrible decisions over there, but yes, we will prop them up. We will, because we have done some horse trading and we've got some things that we can try to make the public think are really good." Who is going to disagree with lower insurance rates? But I don't even think you, today, Speaker, if you could answer me right now, would probably suggest that that 15% is going to happen in the next year, if it will ever happen at all, but it sounds good in a sound bite, and that's unfortunate, because that's what our province is becoming. We're a bunch of sound bites, and the people just run along and listen to those. We need to look at the facts. We need to ensure that we're not just doing horse racing for partisan reasons.

We're told that there are splits in the caucus and that's why some wanted to vote for this budget and some didn't, in the third party. That's for them to choose. They all need to make that decision. As I said earlier, at least they're not sitting on their hands. They've stepped up and said yes—100% of them stood in here the other day and said, "We will support this budget. We will reward that Liberal government for all of their misdeeds. Sorry you're not going to get the eye care you need, sorry that you're not going to get the dental exams that you need, sorry you're not going to get the hospital that you've been promised"—like, as I say, in Markdale we were, 12 years ago. There's \$12 million sitting in the bank ready for that hospital, which has been fundraised by the community.

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: Markdale deserves their hospital.

Mr. Bill Walker: Markdale definitely deserves their hospital, absolutely, and it should have been a priority regardless of whether I happen to be a Conservative from that riding. It should have been done because the people there deserve it, and that will not happen because this government has overspent. It's unfortunate that people in this House will actually look for partisan reasons to support that type of misdeed and misbehaviour. It's mismanagement extraordinaire. I can't believe that people would actually stand up and applaud that and have a party for it, and I can't believe the party on the opposite side when they stand up to defend this budget, this supposedly prosperous and fair Ontario.

Prosperous? I'm not certain how you could ever spin an \$11.9-billion deficit as a prosperous province. I'm not certain how a \$411-billion projected debt, which we will pay for the next 50 years—if we can even get to that point—is a prosperous Ontario. And a fair Ontario? Every turn of the coin, rural Ontario gets hammered. Rural Ontario has things taken away from them or they don't get their fair share of the gas tax, which they've been promised.

At the end of the day, there's continual legislation when you don't even, in regard to the Green Energy Act, allow a local municipality to have their say on something that's going to impact their background. They need to ensure that there is actual democracy happening. The government of the day should have rescinded that like we've asked and given local democracy back to the people who are elected locally. That's one thing that we'll continually fight for.

I can't fathom that anybody in this House, regardless of political stripe, would not believe in fair democracy and would ever, ever reward a party that has mismanaged our economy so badly and run us down the deficit track that they're going full steam ahead at. Now what we have—and today I think the member from High Park made a reference to "Andrea Horwath is leading and Premier Kathleen Wynne is following." That was a new revelation today, so there must be another little backroom deal that just hasn't made it quite public, although that's a little bit public here in the House, but sometimes things get said in the House that aren't supposed to get out of here.

We need to understand who is really leading this new coalition government, because at the end of the day, I think we know where this vote is going to go. We're going to have the NDP prop up those corrupt Liberals that are terrible and shameful and horrible in the morning, but in the afternoon vote, I think they're probably going to stand in unison, 100% of them, in fact, although there might be someone who actually stands up and does the right thing and votes against that budget because they know in their heart of hearts it's not the right budget to turn this province around, it's not the budget that's going to make sure that those pages sitting in front of you and the rest of the kids out there who are looking for a province that they can be proud of and that they have hope in—they know that we have to make decisions. They're going to be difficult decisions, absolutely—there's no doubting that—and there are going to have to be changes, but you cannot be corrupt and prop them up and stand in front of your constituents and look them in the eye and say, "I did the right thing." You have to stand on principle. You have to say, "We're going down the wrong track." We're going down the debt-and-deficit-reduction track, and now we have two people in the front of the train. We're just not sure who's driving—whether it's Andrea or Kathleen Wynne.

We need to ensure that at the end of the day, we're going to—we're going to stand here and do what's right for the people of Ontario. We're going to stand on principle and we're going to say that there is a better way. We want to give hope to our youth. We want to ensure that there is trust in government.

Why is there so much apathy out there? There's so much apathy because these types of things happen. You can waste \$900 million on a gas plant. A very, very defined discussion was had by the Liberals and they said, "Yes, we're still going forward." They've hid documents. Now we hear that they've even deleted very crucial

documents so we can never perhaps get to the bottom of this.

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How do we ever have trust in the government that will do that and stand here and want us to applaud them and give them another chance? We need hope. We need trust. We need confidence. The people need to have confidence in the government that's leading them. We need truth. The truth will come out. But, most importantly, we need a government that when people get up in the morning they say, "Yes, they have our backs. They are leading us down the right path. This is where I want to go. I'll step up and I'll do my part to follow and play that role to make sure."

There is absolutely a better way. We are prepared to stand here and hold that government to account. We will not support this budget which is going down those deficit tracks. There is a better way. The PCs are proud to stand here on behalf of their constituents and ensure that at the end of the day, that there is a change of government at some point. Maybe the NDP, at some point, will surprise us and could have that change. We'll give the people of Ontario, who rightfully deserve the ability to say yes or no to a government, whether they have the faith and the trust. The people need to elect the Premier. The people need to elect the government.

We cannot support this budget. It is just nothing more than more of the same from the Dalton McGuinty and the Kathleen Wynne government.

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

Mr. John O'Toole: It's my privilege, for a couple of minutes, to follow the member from Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound.

I think for the viewer it's important to put things in context. We're really debating the budget, Bill 65. What has happened here is there really is a substantive motion. A substantive motion basically is a coalition agreement between the NDP and the Liberal government. Now really, in fact, what that motion is—it's really a time allocation motion, which means limiting debate on the bill that we wish and think is the most important thing that the province does, which is the budget.

As the member from Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound and our leader, Tim Hudak, said, we've looked at it. We've read the budget. We've looked at the state of the economy of Ontario, and we decided they're on the wrong track.

I think it's important to put on the record, in the very few minutes I have, some of the context of this bill. It says that the deadline for accepting amendments by the committee of written public submissions on the bill shall be at 6 p.m. What I say by time allocation: "The committee is authorized to meet for the purpose of clause-by-clause consideration ... for one day that is two calendar days after the committee meets for public hearings ... from 9 a.m. to noon and from 1 p.m. to 5 p.m. If the second calendar day after public hearings falls on a weekend," clause-by-clause shall be considered on a Monday.

So it really specifically allocates every minute of time. At the end of the day there's a required vote on the 6th of June. Then, any motions or discussion after that—

Interjections.

Mr. John O'Toole: That's what it says in the motion, if you drafted it.

Here's the issue: This is, by any other name, a time allocation motion. It's an admission in a public forum that the NDP and the Liberals are united. What they're really doing here is—it says, "No other motion to revise the parliamentary calendar shall be moved before September 9, 2013...." And then the other amendments that are moved after the 6th will have no bearing.

Interjection.

Mr. John O'Toole: I can see that the House leader for the NDP—he's speaking up over here. But what he's saying is that he's not admitting that the NDP are part of a time allocation motion on a budget.

That's the first time in my 18 years that the voice of the people of Ontario is being ignored, and it is because of the government working in co-operation with the NDP to hoodwink the people of Ontario.

Here's the real evidence: As part of the election, the Auditor General issued a report. In that report he made it very clear that without substantive change in spending they cannot possibly balance the budget. We have the Auditor General's report from April 2013 ultimately saying that the scandalous waste of money at the gas plant is another example that this government cannot manage major projects, or for that matter any projects. In fact, we have the whole reform of Ontario's public service issued at the very beginning of this government's mandate—163 recommendations, all of which said they have to set a new course.

Our government, our leader, our finance critic and others have made it very clear that we can in no way sit, anybody in this House, and support the budget. That's really what this says—without substantive change. They're increasing spending. They're increasing the debt. They're increasing the deficit, and they're shedding on the taxes into the future for our young people. Anybody of conscious thinking and looking at this critically—it's easy to say, "Kumbaya, working together," but the real truth is, we're on the wrong path and the people of Ontario are going to pay.

What about the people with no jobs?

The promises made on auto insurance—a 15% cut—are patently false. What's the delivery? What's the timeline? What are the accountability mechanisms?

There is nothing in this particular—even the substantive amendment, when I look through it, it talks about having a budget officer. We have an Auditor General of this province who's very capable and competent to address the lack of accountability. They want to add another level of bureaucracy to distance them from the government so they can blame someone else. They're the government. We're in trouble. You ask yourself, who caused the trouble? They caused it themselves over the last decade by spending beyond their means.

If you look at the response to the transit challenge, their response is to increase taxes by about \$1,000 a family. Our response is to quit the scandalous spending and waste.

I suspect the NDP are in agreement, really, with the government on the spending of about \$1,000 more in taxes per family. They're agreeing with them. They're voting for this. They know full well that's the agenda.

If the NDP had any courage at all, they would stand with us, and this government would be made to be more accountable. That's what I'm saying. That's what should be done. That's what I want the people of Ontario to know.

Today, we're actually debating the budget. The budget is being managed by a coalition agreement between the NDP and the Liberals. That agreement is time-allocating the amount of debate, and you, the taxpayers of Ontario, are going to pay. It'll probably be about \$100 a person; for a family of five, it'll be no less than \$1,000. We had it in the media yesterday. The Auditor General has said it.

The cancellation of the gas plants: They said it's \$90 million, then \$240 million. I can tell you, it's probably a billion dollars, where you've paid the billion and you get nothing for it. That's the government we have in Ontario today—no accountability.

Even the apology by the Premier, in fairness, on TVOntario, Steve Paikin's show—she didn't say she was sorry for doing it. What she said was that she's sorry it happened. She should have said, "I'm sorry I broke the window," not "I'm sorry the window is broken." This is the deal. She should have said, "I'm sorry that we broke the system"—an admission of guilt—and then asked the Liberal Party of Ontario to pay for it. That's who should be paying for this. It's shameful.

There's not enough time to really make a conclusive argument, but the documents are here. The Auditor General has written two substantive reports. A third report—and this one is written by Don Drummond—163 recommendations. It's all in here. What he said was this: "Unless you reduce spending, you cannot balance the budget."

They are saying to me—

Hon. John Milloy: What about horse racing, John? What do they say about horse racing?

Mr. John O'Toole: The House leader for the Liberals is bringing up horse racing. There's a good example of a government promising one thing and doing something else.

I can tell you, there is more in this document that should be examined, and I think an election is the right place to examine the options for the future.

Our leader, Tim Hudak, has at least had the courage to stand up for what he believes in, as opposed to—

Mr. Gilles Bisson: John, flick him the finger.

Mr. John O'Toole: Well, you can do what you wish, and you can speak the way you wish. I would only say this: You should tell the truth when you speak in this House. We'll leave the rest up to you.

Mr. Speaker, there isn't enough time to get into the real—the devil is in the detail of this budget. Perhaps I

could have the floor when this is next called. I would clarify that with the Speaker.

Debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Thank you. Pursuant to standing order 38, the question that this House do now adjourn is deemed to have been made.

ADJOURNMENT DEBATE

WIND TURBINES

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Huron-Bruce, Ms. Thompson, has given notice of dissatisfaction with the answer to a question given by the Minister of Energy. The member has up to five minutes to debate the matter, and the minister or parliamentary assistant may reply for up to five minutes.

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. We're here this afternoon, as you said, because I asked the Minister of Energy a question and he refused to answer. I respectfully asked, in the spirit of co-operation—which we hear about time and time again from the Premier in a minority government and how it's so important, time and time again, to work well with the folks that are trying to make a difference. But you know what? I'm really doubtful that my question will even be answered today. My question was this: Will this working group that we hear has been pulled together to study the whole issue around wind turbines include opposition members?

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But you know what? I don't understand why the minister and the Premier wouldn't think it useful or smart, right out of the gate, to include a couple of the opposition members. We're the ones that are fielding calls from our constituents about the turbines. We're the ones that are hearing from municipalities about the local issues, because they have no say in the siting of industrial wind turbines. I'm doubtful that the members from Brampton West, Brampton-Springdale, St. Catharines, Ottawa and Peterborough are getting calls from their constituents about industrial wind turbines, but we are.

The Premier said yesterday morning in question period that she wanted to work "in collaboration with the opposition." And at this point, I really have to wonder if the Premier means only to the party left of me. They only want to work with anyone to the left side of this line.

The truth is, the facts are mounting. Plain and simple, the FIT program is unaffordable. It was ill-advised, ill-conceived and not costed out, and it has caused everyone to lose confidence in Ontario's energy policy. Further to that, WTO has actually ruled against it. And just today, in the news, we're realizing that finally, this Liberal government is atoning for this waste of policy that has just absolutely polluted the countryside with industrial wind turbines, because they're having to change provisions within their act to go in compliance with the ruling from WTO—finally. You know what? if they

listened to the people that are involved, maybe there could have been a difference here.

We're not the only ones telling this Liberal government that they've got it wrong. Don Drummond did, the Auditor General did, and just last month, the Fraser report told you that planned expansion of wind energy under the GEA is not cost-efficient and will, if pursued, raise costs to provincial households possibly another 40% to 60%.

You know, just moments ago, we heard debate from the third party referencing the plight of the impoverished people in Ontario. Well, guess what? If we don't get this right, if the Liberal government doesn't get the right people to the table to make a difference, they're going to be facing those poor people with even higher electricity bills, and it's going to really cause more strife across this province. People are just not getting it, but we in the opposition party do get it, and we do want to make a difference.

It's interesting: The minister is planning on making an announcement tomorrow on the municipality's role in the siting of renewable energy projects. I wonder if the parliamentary assistant today is going to give us a sneak peek as to what that announcement is going to be. But I doubt it, as his party only seems to take advice from one opposition party in this Legislature, and that's on the left side.

I've been hearing from people and municipalities who are getting hung out to dry by this government. For example, they are investing in solar projects, yet their contracts are not getting approved by the OPA, with no explanation.

I also understand that there are no new FIT contracts being accepted either. Could this be that Liberals have finally come to terms with the fact that they have made a mess of this energy file and they now realize the FIT program is a disaster?

I can assure this House, Speaker, that I will be watching tomorrow's announcement very, very carefully, and I will continue to ensure that I will work for municipalities who have asked for their planning power back. I am proud to represent the municipalities that are trying to make a difference, and I will stand by them.

We have the municipality of Bluewater in Durham county, which has been approached by three different wind companies in opposition to their permit fees. They're going to go to court. This is money that could have been spent on local issues—on hospitals—in their municipality, where it makes a difference. But instead, they're going to be fighting wind companies because of this Green Energy Act.

Speaker, there are grave concerns. I have to ask: Will this government stop their charade and invite the opposition to join them at the table so a real difference can be made going forward? Thank you.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The parliamentary assistant, the member from Mississauga–Streetsville, has five minutes.

Mr. Bob Delaney: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to answer the question on behalf of

the Minister of Energy and address the concerns raised by the member from Huron–Bruce in regard to the siting of renewable energy projects.

I think, first, it's important to recognize why our investments in green energy are so important. Ontario has created more than 31,000 jobs and attracted billions of dollars of investment with our clean energy policies. Our province's commitment to developing clean energy sources has allowed us to stop relying on dirty, coal-fired electricity generation, which allows us to reduce Ontario's carbon footprint, but it also makes our air cleaner, it protects the health of Ontarians everywhere and it helps us to reduce our health care costs. I think it's also important to acknowledge there are almost 20 municipalities currently building feed-in tariff projects, including Brockville, Kitchener, Lambton Shores, Markham, Waterloo and Welland.

This being said, I understand the concerns being raised by the member from Huron–Bruce. Respecting local decision-making and preserving the health of our communities, particularly in rural Ontario, has always been a top priority for both the Premier and the Minister of Energy. In fact, the province has already made several changes to the feed-in tariff program in order to ensure municipal concerns are better heard and better addressed.

Under the new feed-in tariff rules, there is a new point system, which includes points for the amount of support they receive from the community and from aboriginal groups. Making community support one of the key criteria for whether or not a project gets approved is a significant step forward. Moreover, the current renewable energy approvals process, which is run through the Ministry of the Environment, makes it mandatory for municipalities to be consulted on the approval of a given project. Those applying for a feed-in tariff project must not only document those concerns but they have to indicate how they will address the issues and the concerns that the municipality has raised. If they do not do this, the renewable energy approval process does not proceed. While the changes have been substantial steps forward, the system is not perfect, and the province is taking steps to make necessary adjustments so we can better address local concerns.

As the member from Huron–Bruce pointed out, the Ministry of Energy is working with the Ministers of Municipal Affairs and Housing, Environment and Rural Affairs on this issue to make sure that the concerns of municipalities, particularly rural municipalities, are better heard, better understood and better addressed. That's what's important: improving the process for siting energy projects in Ontario.

The Minister of Energy has also asked the Ontario Power Authority and the Independent Electricity System Operator to develop a process to create regional energy plans that will include formal input from municipalities, communities, the public and the energy sector. The minister has also asked the Ontario Power Authority and the Independent Electricity System Operator to take into account any recommendations on the siting of energy

infrastructure that come out of the Standing Committee on Justice Policy. Members of the committee will have an opportunity to give suggestions and improve upfront decision-making to ensure the province gets energy siting right the first time. I hope opposition members take this opportunity for providing input seriously, which I hope addresses the question the member put earlier.

Speaker, our province understands how important investing in clean energy is. We also know we need to address municipal concerns if we want to continue growing the clean energy sector. The opposition has their

view of how we should do that, and they will have the opportunity to weigh in on the matter through the committee process. Ultimately, the best way to ensure that local concerns are heard and addressed is by consulting directly with municipalities, and that is exactly what our government, our ministries and our agencies in Ontario are doing.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Thank you. This House now stands adjourned until 9 o'clock tomorrow morning.

The House adjourned at 1809.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO
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Hillier, Randy (PC)	Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington	
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Milloy, Hon. / L'hon. John (LIB)	Kitchener Centre / Kitchener-Centre	Minister of Government Services / Ministre des Services gouvernementaux Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire du gouvernement

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Naqvi, Hon. / L'hon. Yasir (LIB)	Ottawa Centre / Ottawa-Centre	
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O'Toole, John (PC)	Durham	
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Ouellette, Jerry J. (PC)	Oshawa	
Pettapiece, Randy (PC)	Perth–Wellington	
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Sandals, Hon. / L'hon. Liz (LIB)	Guelph	Minister of Education / Ministre de l'Éducation
Schein, Jonah (NDP)	Davenport	
Scott, Laurie (PC)	Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock	
Sergio, Hon. / L'hon. Mario (LIB)	York West / York-Ouest	Minister Responsible for Seniors / Ministre délégué aux Affaires des personnes âgées Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille
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Singh, Jagmeet (NDP)	Bramalea–Gore–Malton	
Smith, Todd (PC)	Prince Edward–Hastings	
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Takhar, Harinder S. (LIB)	Mississauga–Erindale	
Taylor, Monique (NDP)	Hamilton Mountain	
Thompson, Lisa M. (PC)	Huron–Bruce	
Vanthof, John (NDP)	Timiskaming–Cochrane	
Walker, Bill (PC)	Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound	
Wilson, Jim (PC)	Simcoe–Grey	Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire de l'opposition officielle
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Wynne, Hon. / L'hon. Kathleen O. (LIB)	Don Valley West / Don Valley-Ouest	Minister of Agriculture and Food / Ministre de l'Agriculture et de l'Alimentation Premier / Première ministre Leader, Government / Chef du gouvernement 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	London West / London-Ouest	
Vacant	Windsor–Tecumseh	

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Lisa M. Thompson
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Steven Del Duca, Bob Delaney
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Phil McNeely, Norm Miller
Jerry J. Ouellette, Shafiq Qaadri
Jagmeet Singh
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Ted Chudleigh, Cheri DiNovo
Ernie Hardeman, Helena Jaczek
Amrit Mangat, Michael Mantha
Jane McKenna
Committee Clerk / Greffier: William Short

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