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Monday 29 February 2016

Lundi 29 février 2016

Speaker
Honourable Dave Levac

Président
L'honorable Dave Levac

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Hansard Reporting and Interpretation Services
Room 500, West Wing, Legislative Building
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Service du Journal des débats et d'interprétation
Salle 500, aile ouest, Édifice du Parlement
111, rue Wellesley ouest, Queen's Park
Toronto ON M7A 1A2
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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Monday 29 February 2016

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lundi 29 février 2016

The House met at 1030.

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

Prayers.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Monte McNaughton: I'm really excited to have, from my riding of Lambton–Kent–Middlesex, Darryl Boersma and Tim Arends in the House today. Welcome.

Mr. John Vanthof: I would like to welcome the Golden Horseshoe Food and Farming Alliance here today. Their members are Lyndon Stewart, Helene St. Jacques, Joanne Hickey-Evans, Quinton Woods, Mary Fragedakis, Steve Crawford, Bill Hodgson, Dana McCauley, Kevin Turbell, Colin Best, Stacey Jebb and Janet Horner. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Hon. Helena Jaczek: Please help me recognize Councillor Avia Eek from ward 6, township of King, a farmer in the Holland Marsh and part of the Golden Horseshoe Food and Farming Alliance here today. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. Toby Barrett: As you know, the Golden Horseshoe Food and Farming Alliance are here today: Kathy Macpherson, Peter Lambrick, Lia Lappano, Nancy Rutherford, Sue Todd, Ken Lamb, Jamie Cox, Sonia Dhir, Rosemary MacLellan, Olga Pawluczyk, Doug Van Luyk and Jamie Draves. Welcome to the Legislature.

Mrs. Kathryn McGarry: I'd like to introduce a few members from Waterloo region this morning who are representing the Council of Ontario Construction Associations: Martha George, Jeff Kienapple, Wes Quickfall and Ted Dreyer. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. Monte McNaughton: I want to welcome, from COCA today, Jeff Koller, Dan Lancia, Jodi Travers and Ian Cunningham. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I want to welcome many students who are here today from the Canadian Black Caucus. The Canadian Black Caucus is a non-partisan organization that seeks to promote civic engagement by inspiring youth to engage in the political process. Welcome to them, each and every one.

Hon. Bill Mauro: I'm not sure if they're here today or not, but just a shout-out to the Krista McCarville rink from Thunder Bay, which came within one point of winning the Scotties national championship last night, losing to Alberta in the 10th end, as I understand it. So, a shout-out to Krista McCarville and her rink from Thunder Bay.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: I would like to welcome Jim Lyons and Matthew Todd from the Windsor Construction Association. They're here, and I'll be meeting with them later on. Welcome.

Hon. Ted McMeekin: I want to introduce representatives from the Golden Horseshoe Food and Farming Alliance: Robert Pasuta, who is my councillor from Hamilton; Joanna Downey; Eric Acs; Nancy Gaffney; John Hambly; Allan Thompson; Avia Eek; Ben Roberts; Nancy Rutherford; Gerald Kellington; Tom Wilson; Michael Wolfson; Michael Barrett; and Suzanne van Bommel. They'll be here for a gathering later today. Welcome, all.

Mr. Todd Smith: I'd like to welcome a few people for the COCA reception this afternoon, as well, who have joined us for question period: Martin Benson, Suzanne Fitch and Ian Cunningham from the Council of Ontario Construction Associations.

Hon. Reza Moridi: It's my pleasure to introduce members of the Council of Ontario Construction Associations, who are having a lunch meeting today in room 230, as well as their evening reception in the dining room at 5 p.m.

Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde: On behalf of my colleague the Honourable Jim Bradley, MPP for St. Catharines, it gives me great pleasure to introduce page captain Sarah Mateus-Jimenez and her mother, Lilianna Maria Jimenez-Delgado, who is here in our gallery today. Welcome.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: I'd like to take this opportunity to welcome the Canadian Organization for Rare Disorders—or CORD, as they're known—to Queen's Park. CORD will be hosting a reception in the Side Bar Room downstairs, beside the legislative dining room, after question period today. I invite all members of this House to join their reception.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: It's my pleasure today to introduce my husband, Joseph Varner, and my daughter, Victoria Ann MacLeod-Varner. They are not actually in the gallery; they're in my office, and she probably has her headset on, but I just wanted to introduce them today anyway.

Mr. Michael Mantha: Ça me fait grand plaisir d'introduire un ami de jeunesse, M. Denis Shank, le président de l'Association de la construction de Sudbury. Bienvenue, mon ami.

Ms. Indira Naidoo-Harris: I'd like to welcome Peter Lambrick, who is here this morning as part of the Golden Horseshoe Food and Farming Alliance. Peter is also a director of the Ontario farming association.

Mr. Jeff Yurek: There are three constituents here today. I'm not sure if they're in the House yet. Lisa Jibson is here, Suzanne van Bommel was announced earlier, and—I think it's free for me to say, because he's not in the House—former MPP Steve Peters is in the House today.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Well, he's not in the House, so I get to bypass that one.

The member from Durham?

Mr. Granville Anderson: Speaker, I would like to welcome Nancy Rutherford, manager of agriculture and rural affairs at the region of Durham.

Hon. Steven Del Duca: Mr. Speaker, I'll beg your indulgence for a quick moment. This isn't technically the introduction of a visitor who's here in the building, but I did want to introduce my newest nephew, the newest addition to our family, who was born to my brother Michael and my sister-in-law Amanda at 1:50 a.m., very early this morning, just down the street, at Mount Sinai. He's seven pounds, eight ounces, and his name is Alexander Henry Del Duca. Welcome to the world.

Mr. John Yakabuski: On behalf of my colleague from Sarnia-Lambton, I'd like to welcome the family of Tristan Bhola, page captain this morning: mother, Patricia Bhikam Bhola; father, Rudy Bhola; sister Davinia Bhola; and brothers Nicholas and Harry Bhola. They will be in the public gallery this morning. Welcome to Queen's Park.

WEARING OF SCARVES

Hon. Kevin Daniel Flynn: Speaker, I believe you will find that we have unanimous consent that all members be permitted to wear scarves in recognition of Rare Disease Day.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The Minister of Labour is seeking unanimous consent to wear scarves in recognition of Rare Disease Day. Do we agree? Agreed.

For clarification purposes: Have they been distributed to each gallery?

Hon. Kevin Daniel Flynn: Speaker, they will be distributed. I think the member from North Bay will really like these scarves.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. They just arrived.

1040

ORAL QUESTIONS

PROVINCIAL DEFICIT

Mr. Patrick Brown: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Premier.

The Liberals continue to claim they will eventually balance the budget, but their numbers simply don't add up. The budget projects \$4 billion more in revenue than the Financial Accountability Officer said is possible. The

Liberals project \$4 billion more in revenue than the FAO's best-case scenario.

Mr. Speaker, a simple question: Whose numbers are correct—the Premier's or the Financial Accountability Officer's?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I know that the Minister of Finance is going to want to comment on the deficit reduction.

The fact is that we are on track to eliminate our deficit by 2017-18. We've beaten our deficit targets for the seventh year in a row, and we'll be balancing the budget next year, in 2017-18, which is the target that we've put in place. We are meeting that target.

Mr. Speaker, the budget is about the investments in this province. It's about the investments in students who are going to have more access to post-secondary education because of the changes we're making on tuition. Our budget is about putting in place a cap-and-trade system that is going to fight greenhouse gas emissions and fight climate change. That's about economic growth, innovation and the future.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Patrick Brown: Back to the Premier: It's all smoke and mirrors. The Liberals accuse the Financial Accountability Officer of being wrong, but their shell game has already started. The Liberals are moving money around to lower their deficit this year. How? The Liberals raided the contingency fund. They took \$850 million of money that was meant for Ontario's rainy day. Mr. Speaker, that money is supposed to protect Ontario if we have another recession.

Why is the Premier using Ontario's rainy day fund to temporarily fudge the bottom line?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Mr. Speaker, let's talk about the investments that we're making in this budget.

As I said, we are on track to eliminate the deficit by 2017-18. We've overachieved on our targets every year for seven years, and the deficit will be eliminated next year—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): This is just the subtle start. If I have to go further, I will.

Premier?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Let's talk about what we've done, Mr. Speaker, in terms of investment in infrastructure. We're in our third year of a \$160-billion investment, which is creating 110,000 jobs a year.

We're increasing health care funding—that's one of the things that the Leader of the Opposition was talking about before the budget; I assume he supports it now—including \$345 million a year for hospital funding. That's something, again, that he was looking for.

We're lowering hospital parking fees.

We're improving services for children and youth with autism, a \$330-million investment over five years. That's something that we heard about during the budget consultations, and that will help children all over the province.

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

Mr. Patrick Brown: Back to the Premier: The numbers don't lie. The Liberal shell game to reduce the deficit is just that.

For the last two years, the Liberals have said that the Hydro One fire sale is going to pay for infrastructure. How many times have we heard that? This budget proves otherwise. The Liberals have reduced the deficit by applying a \$2.6-billion one-time departure tax from the sale of Hydro One and using another \$1.1 billion of revenue from the Hydro One fire sale. Mr. Speaker, it is a shell game.

Will the Premier finally come clean? Is the Hydro One fire sale going for infrastructure or is it paying for your years of mismanagement, waste and scandal? Yes or no?

Interjections.

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

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I'm standing. Premier?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Finance.

Hon. Charles Sousa: Mr. Speaker, there's one thing that the member opposite did get right: The numbers do matter. And what matters here is that we are achieving our results, we're exceeding our targets, we're growing the economy and we're balancing the books. When he made reference to the fact that numbers don't lie—that's exactly what's in this budget.

The Conference Board of Canada and others have made very clear that the budget is one of the most transparent with the highest integrity. We've laid out very clearly in this budget where it's going, how it's being affected and how we're coming to balance while investing in the things that matter to the people of Ontario. I'm very proud of this budget, very proud of the people of Ontario who make it happen.

ONTARIO BUDGET

Mr. Patrick Brown: My question is for the Premier. No one believes this government. This government has no credibility. This government's idea of an affordable energy plan is offering \$2 a month in energy rebates—\$2 a month—the same day they announced \$387 in increased costs. Premier, are you kidding me? How do you possibly think this makes sense?

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Through the Chair, please. To the Chair, please.

Premier.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Mr. Speaker, let's just talk about what people are saying about the budget. Gabrielle Ross-Marquette of the Canadian Federation of Students—Ontario said students “have a lot to celebrate today with this commitment to fairness, equity and justice for students,” particularly those from low-income families.

Let's see what Spencer Nestico-Semianiw, president of OUSA, the Ontario university students' association, said: “These are sweeping improvements that will

dramatically improve financial aid for our students. Students will receive more grants, and for many of them, tuition will be free.”

Interjections.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I hear the heckling from the other side that it's a percentage of students. Yes, Mr. Speaker, it's low-income students. It's students who don't have access to post-secondary. Those are the students who will most benefit from the changes that we're making.

The Ontario Pharmacists Association: “Ontario's pharmacists have long advocated for equitable access to needed”—

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

Mr. Patrick Brown: Back to the Premier: No one believes this government. I can't say that more clearly. We know the health tax did not go to health care. Hospitals are at their brink, nurses are being cut, and doctors are closing their practices. Smart meters were supposed to lower energy costs. They certainly didn't save a cent.

Mr. Speaker, given this government's record, why should anyone believe their cap-and-trade will actually fight emissions and won't simply become another ugly Liberal slush fund?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport, come to order. The member from Prince Edward—Hastings, come to order.

Premier.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Well, Mr. Speaker, the member opposite obviously looks at the budget and looks at the changes we're making, particularly on cap-and-trade—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Prince Edward—Hastings, second time.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: —which is, remember, a strategy to deal with climate change, to deal with the fact that we are living in an environment that has been changed by humankind. It is being altered in ways that are going to degrade the economy or are already degrading the economy.

There's an article this morning about the effects on the north. You only have to sit with colleagues from across the country, particularly from the north, to understand that the way of life in terms of ice roads and the ability to get supplies into the north has been completely changed because of climate change.

It is our responsibility to take action. That's what we're doing. That's what cap-and-trade is. We will make it a transparent system—

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

Mr. Patrick Brown: Mr. Speaker, back to the Premier: Ontario families and seniors will not be fooled; they will not be tricked. Nothing in this budget gives without taking away from something else. Hospitals get a

1% increase, but this government took away \$107 million in gaming revenue that was previously targeted to hospitals. Some seniors get a free vaccine, but then the Liberals nearly double the cost of all other medications. You offer students a tuition grant, but you take away their tax credit.

Mr. Speaker, why is this Premier robbing Peter to pay Paul?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Let's talk about the supports we're putting in place for seniors, just to take that part of the question: an additional \$250 million to expand capacity to deliver high-quality home and community care; and \$75 million over three years in community-based residential hospice and palliative care.

In fact, the member's colleague from Nipissing, PC MPP Vic Fedeli, actually said, "I was really pleased to see the hospice money come through. We have a hospice in North Bay and it's such a huge need. When I saw that, I thought that was excellent."

So, in fact, there are supports being put in place for people across this province, every corner of this province and every age group. I think the Leader of the Opposition needs to look at the budget as a totality.

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

New question. The leader of the third party.

1050

ONTARIO DRUG BENEFIT PROGRAM

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is for the Premier. Does the Premier really believe, as has been reported, that a senior earning \$19,500 a year is affluent?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Let me just say to the leader of the third party that the objective of the change in the budget was to ensure that fewer Ontario seniors have to pay any annual deductible on their prescription drugs. That was the intention.

We want to make sure that we got it right for other seniors as well, though, and I understand that. We're going to look carefully at this regulation that is out for consultation, and if we didn't get it right, then we will make a change in terms of that threshold.

I would say to the leader of the third party that I would ask her to work with us. The objective was to make sure that more seniors had free access to prescription medication. If we didn't get that threshold right, we will correct that in the process of the consultation on the regulation.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: A single senior living on \$19,500 a year in a city like Toronto, Hamilton, Ottawa, Kingston or London isn't rich, but they will see their drug costs nearly double. Can this Premier explain why she's nearly doubling drug costs for seniors across Ontario, including seniors living on less than \$19,500 a year?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I know that the leader of the third party had the second question written before I answered, but I hope that she understands that in answer

to her first question I said that there were 170,000 more seniors who will have access to free prescription medication. That was the intention: to make sure that more seniors had that access.

If, in the consultation on the regulation, we determine that we didn't get that threshold right—and I think what the leader of the third party is saying is that she doesn't think we did. If we can find some consensus on that, and we need to change that threshold, we will change it. I hope the leader of the third party understands that is our intention as the consultation is ongoing.

Interjection.

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

Member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke, come to order.

Final supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: This Premier put out a budget threatening seniors with nearly doubling their drug costs, and now she's trying to back away from that. This Premier did not consult with seniors at all prior to putting that piece of information out there in the budget. New Democrats do listen to seniors across this province, and do you know what they're telling us? They can't pay the bills. They can't pay their hydro bill. They can't keep the lights on. They can't keep their homes heated and their apartments heated. This callous Premier is about to double their drug costs. She is out of touch. She needs to dial this back and do the right thing by the seniors of this province.

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

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I assume, because as I have listened to seniors as well across the province, as has the leader of the third party, that she would understand that 170,000 more seniors having access to free prescription medication would be a good thing. That's in our budget. I don't know if she missed that part, but that is in our budget. That was the intention of the change that we made.

We are also increasing funding to palliative care. We are increasing funding in terms of the shingles vaccine so that it will no longer cost any senior—and I don't know what the Leader of the Opposition was talking about when he was talking about some seniors, but any senior—it will not cost them \$170 to get that vaccine now. We have made those changes: the 170,000 more seniors who will have access to free medication. I heard that too. That's why it's in there. If we didn't get the threshold right on the other part of the change, then we will change that.

EDUCATION FUNDING

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My next question is also for the Premier. Communities are seeing their neighbourhood schools closed. Kids who need special supports are seeing those supports cut. Students are having to wear winter jackets in their classrooms because there isn't money to fix the heaters.

Can this Premier explain to students, their parents and their educators why it is that she's cutting another \$430 million from education this year and over a billion dollars since 2014?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Mr. Speaker, in fact, in the budget, the leader of the third party will notice that we are increasing funding to education by \$350 million.

One of the very important things that we are doing is, we are putting \$333 million more into autism funding. Children with autism are some of the most vulnerable in society, in our province. Making sure that we increase funding and that we do it in a way that allows those kids to get access to the treatment that they need early, when it makes a difference to them—that's why that \$333 million is extremely important.

On top of that, we continue with the investments in capital: \$11 billion in the education system over the next 10 years.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Speaker, the budget cuts \$430 million out of education, but that's not all. The Premier is cutting \$1.2 billion out of other programs, but there are no details about what those other programs might be, what services people might be losing. Is it road safety? Is it food inspections? Is it water safety? Exactly what is that \$1.2 billion coming from, and how many people are going to lose their jobs?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Education.

Hon. Liz Sandals: I'm delighted that you asked about this because, in fact, we spent \$325 million more on renewal last year than the previous year, but what happened as a result of that was that school boards spent more money on more big projects. Do you know what happens, Speaker? What happens is, if you spend on a project over \$10,000, it's counted as capital and it's counted over 25 years. So yes, it looks like the spending went down, but in fact there were more big projects—\$325 million more worth of big projects.

Of course, the other reason that the spending went down is that we don't pay people who go on strike. We didn't project a strike. We didn't pay the people who went on strike.

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Speaker, on page 256 of the budget, Ontarians will see, when they look—because they can go online and look at the budget—regardless of what these ministers and this Premier says, \$1.5 billion in cuts: \$430 million cut from education, \$50 million cut from colleges and universities, and \$1.2 billion slashed out of just about everything else.

Cuts like this hurt people. They hurt young people. They hurt seniors. They hurt parents. They hurt people in cities, in rural Ontario, in the north, in the south.

What the Premier doesn't seem to get is that people are counting on public services, and the Premier is failing—failing—at providing Ontarians with their most basic needs.

Will this Premier start listening to Ontarians and take the cuts out of her budget?

Hon. Liz Sandals: I would ask, please, that the leader of the third party go and look at the actual projections in the budget, because what the budget quite clearly says is that the spending on child care, elementary and secondary education is increasing on an average of 1.2% per year. It isn't being cut; it's going up every year. We are managing our costs, but it is going up every year, Speaker, just like the spending for health care, just like the spending in all the other areas of our budget. It's moderate growth—not dramatic growth, but moderate growth—and that's how we're going to come to balance: by careful, moderate growth that does a better job of educating our students so more students are graduating than ever before in Ontario.

ONTARIO BUDGET

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

In 2014, the Auditor General warned that Liberal mismanagement of our finances is “crowding out” the services we need in Ontario. Because they did absolutely nothing about it, the auditor repeated herself almost word for word in the 2015 report.

And now we see from the 2016 budget that life in Ontario has gotten even more expensive. This is because of the cancellation of the children's tax credit, the cancellation of the Healthy Homes Renovation Tax Credit and almost doubling the cost of drugs for most seniors—all because of 13 years of Liberal waste, mismanagement and scandal.

1100

Speaker, my question to the Premier is: Why are the Liberals balancing the books on the backs of children, families and seniors?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Finance.

Hon. Charles Sousa: I appreciate the question from the opposition critic. I hope he takes—in the supplementary, recognizing what we have done to increase support for seniors, to increase support for our children, to increase support for tuition so that more of those most vulnerable have an opportunity to go to post-secondary, to increase support for hospitals and health care by \$1 billion year over year, all of which is enabling everybody to be at their best, including social programs.

At the same time, we're investing heavily in infrastructure, investing heavily to stimulate economic growth. With our measures that we are taking, we are also balancing the books. In the end, Ontarians expect us to manage prudently while still ensuring that we support the services that are so valuable to all Ontarians.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Back to the Premier: We believe that this budget was a real opportunity for the government to show the people of Ontario that they were listening. All parties travelled throughout Ontario, all read the hundreds of letters and all heard about the pain people are feeling under this government. Families warned that they can no longer make their hydro payments.

Steve and Sheryl Ciglen from Trout Creek said that their hydro bill was \$904.23 last month, even though they

were away for a whole week and their furnace was off for five days because of a power outage. They're small business folks, ready to hire another person, but now they can't, because not only did this budget not help them with their hydro bill; it brought more costs to their business.

I ask the Premier: What do you say to the Ciglens, who see only higher costs for their family?

Hon. Charles Sousa: The member opposite made reference to consultations. Of course, it was the first time the Minister of Finance actually invited members of the finance committee to appear and have a discussion on these matters.

We all did consultations across the province over 20 cities, and I was very proud of the work that everyone did. They said, "No, why don't you come to meet with us?" I did, and I thank the member opposite for sending his email memorandum to that committee to advise us of, "Don't make any cuts. Oh, furthermore, spend more." And then he goes on to say, "You know what? Don't increase revenues. Oh, yeah, and balance the books."

I don't have the luxury, as finance minister, to live in their fiscal fantasyland. I live in the hard currency of reality, to balance the books and to ensure that we do what's necessary for the people of Ontario. That's what we are doing.

Interjections.

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

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I'm going to ask for a little bit of civility—and a reminder that we in this House mention only the person's riding or their title. Let's raise respect.

ONTARIO BUDGET

Ms. Catherine Fife: My question is to the Minister of Finance. It's interesting that the 2016 budget is called Jobs For Today and Tomorrow. What this government fails to realize is that people are actually seeing fewer jobs today and, according to this government's budget, fewer jobs tomorrow, across Ontario.

For the second year in a row, this government has failed to meet its job creation goals by more than 60,000 jobs. If the government had listened to the people of this province during the pre-budget consultations instead of undermining the process, they would have heard that Ontarians are struggling. And no, I'm not referring to the Premier's well-connected friends; I'm talking about the rest of Ontario, who are having a harder time making ends meet and finding good-paying, permanent jobs.

Minister, what do you say to the Ontarians who feel that this Liberal government has left them behind once again?

Hon. Charles Sousa: Let me clarify some things for the finance critic from the NDP. Ontario and Ontarians have produced 608,000 net new jobs since the depths of the recession. Ontarians are continuing to work hard, and

320,000 additional jobs are being achieved over the next 36 months, all of which are primarily full-time, high-paying and in the private sector. I compliment the tremendous amount of work that's being done by the people of Ontario.

We did listen, Mr. Speaker. We went across the province as well. In fact, I compliment the member opposite who actually provided some tangible ideas as to what we should do in this budget, which we included. In fact, one of the direct fundings we need, that attendant at SCOFEA said, is \$3 billion more for bio-industrial innovation, and we put that on page 10.

There was an additional request for pregnancy and infant loss supports, and we put that in the budget as well.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock. Just before I commence, I've already noticed that some members have been advised that hanging the scarves over their desks is not conducive to our place. If you just fold them and put them on your desk or put them on, that would be appreciated. Thank you.

Supplementary.

Ms. Catherine Fife: Minister, it's almost like you're talking about a different budget, and perhaps it's because Mr. Clark probably wrote this budget. Everyone in Ontario knows that this is a stretch-goal budget.

During the pre-budget consultations—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock. Order, please. I'm standing, first of all. Second of all, let's just stop.

Please finish.

Ms. Catherine Fife: Speaker, everyone in Ontario knows that this is a stretch-goal budget. During the pre-budget consultations, it became crystal clear to New Democrats that this government doesn't understand the priorities of Ontarians. Why else would a government fail to provide Ontarians with better health care, better jobs and a stronger education system? Why else would a government sell off a revenue-generating asset like Hydro One and leave Ontarians stuck footing the bill? It just doesn't add up.

Minister, when will this government stand up for Ontarians and get the fundamentals right?

Hon. Charles Sousa: The numbers speak for themselves, Mr. Speaker. We do aspire to do more and to do better for the people of Ontario. That, I agree. In fact, we agree to be fair in the determinations of the work we do. We continue to support tuition and our education by increasing funding. We're supporting our seniors and our health care by increasing funding there as well.

Mr. Speaker, we all went through the province. I reflected very seriously on the submissions made to SCOFEA. Their priorities and their values are very much reflected in this budget, and I am very proud of that.

One of their requests was, "Ensure that you continue to invest in our future. Ensure that you don't leave anybody behind." We're investing \$160 billion over the next 12 years to support infrastructure and the needs of

all communities across Ontario, some of it with permanent funding so that those municipalities can plan as well.

ONTARIO BUDGET

Mr. Han Dong: My question is also to the Minister of Finance. Minister, last Thursday our government tabled the 2016 Ontario budget, Jobs for Today and Tomorrow. The reviews are in. Stakeholders from each corner of the province and from every sector are applauding our government's plan.

The constituents in my riding of Trinity–Spadina have already told me about their excitement in our government's solid approach to growing the economy and creating jobs, especially the students of the University of Toronto and OCAD University.

It is now clear to all that we will be balancing our budget by the year 2017-18. Can the Minister of Finance please tell us more about this historic budget?

Hon. Charles Sousa: I'd like to thank the member from Trinity–Spadina for his question and for participating today in a major announcement about supporting more jobs.

Mr. Speaker, our government's number one priority is growing the economy and creating jobs. Our economic plan supports good jobs today in communities across Ontario by investing in infrastructure and in a low-carbon economy by innovative, high-growth, export-oriented businesses.

The plan also helps all Ontarians achieve more security. Ontarians are worried about the state of the economy. We understand that, and that's why we've taken measures in this budget to ensure how it might affect them and their families. That's why we have tabled a budget that invests in jobs for today and tomorrow. That's because our biggest advantage is our people.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Han Dong: I want to thank the minister for his answer. What a great job on the budget.

Minister, you're quite right that Ontario's best attribute is its people, and they know that our plan will make their everyday lives easier. Minister, there are a number of key investments that we are making in this budget, and I know that this House would like to hear more about what we are doing. Mr. Speaker, can the Minister of Finance please inform this House about our plan to continue to create jobs for today and tomorrow?

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Hon. Charles Sousa: I thank the member for the awesome question and great reflection on the value of this budget. I know that my colleagues will want to speak about specifics, but I'm happy to outline the things I am most proud of in this budget. Over the weekend, a major newspaper's headline said that this budget says and reflects that there's "room for everyone."

It's so true, Mr. Speaker: by transforming student assistance to make average college and university tuition free for students with financial need from families of

incomes of less than \$50,000; by taking action on climate change and investing all proceeds from cap-and-trade into green projects; by making the biggest investment in infrastructure in Ontario's history—\$160 billion over 12 years starting in 2014-15; and by making everyday life easier for people across the province by lowering costs and enhancing convenience and choice, we're in this together for the benefit of the people of Ontario.

SENIORS

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: My question is for the minister responsible for seniors. For decades, Ontario's seniors have worked hard to make our province great. But now, thanks to the Liberal budget, their retirement years are becoming completely unaffordable.

Will the minister please explain what the Liberals have against the seniors of this province?

Hon. Mario Sergio: I want to thank the member for that question; I knew it would be coming, but I didn't know when. I'm really delighted to answer the question with respect to our seniors. We have done so much, not only in this budget, Speaker, but previous to this budget. Whatever we had been doing for the seniors prior to this will continue after the benefits our seniors are receiving in this new budget.

As never before, no one has done more than the previous and existing governments when it comes to benefits for our seniors, Speaker. And I will add more, with respect to individual benefits that our seniors are receiving now and will continue to receive afterwards.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: Mr. Speaker, I received a letter from a retired couple. They had to sell their home because they could no longer afford the Liberal cost of living. The cost of hydro is going up, food is going up and now the government is piling on higher gas taxes at home and at the pumps. What are seniors getting out of it? Nothing new for long-term-care beds. Nothing new for seniors' physiotherapy. At the same time, they're making it more expensive for seniors to buy their medication.

My question is this: When the Minister of Finance said he was increasing seniors' drug benefit deductibles by 70%, where was the minister for seniors? Why didn't he speak up when he had the chance?

Hon. Mario Sergio: This is what our seniors' benefits are now. I'm going to give them individually so the member will know, and for the benefit of every member of this House:

- \$500 savings for the Ontario property tax grant;
- up to \$1,100.31 for the Ontario energy tax credit;
- \$287 for the Ontario Sales Tax Credit;
- \$1,500 for their home renovation tax;
- over 65, \$3,800 in free drugs;
- 10% savings on hydro bills; and

—173,000 people are not paying \$100 co-payments after this new budget.

What else can we do for the seniors, Speaker? We can do even more: 173,000 don't pay over \$100, but we have also increased the age bracket where the seniors are getting drug benefits.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

M^{me} France Gélinas: Ma question est pour le ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée. Years of frozen hospital budgets have had severe consequences for health care in Ontario. Today, patients face long wait times in ERs and cancelled surgeries, or they get admitted into hallways. Beds have been closed, hospital services moved to private clinics and 1,200 registered nurses have been cut in just over a year.

Now, for the seventh straight year in a row, hospital funding falls way below inflation. A 1% increase won't cover the cost of population growth or aging. It won't fix the damage that the Liberals have done to our hospitals and it won't stop even more cuts to front-line care.

How can the minister defend another year of cuts to our hospital care that families rely on?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: I'm not even sure how to begin to answer that question, because to suggest that an extra \$1 billion into our health care system, \$345 million new for our hospitals—which is a 2.1% increase, actually. It's more than the rate of inflation.

I was just at an announcement with the finance minister this morning at University Health Network. We were surrounded by patients, advocates, health care workers, Anthony Dale from the Ontario Hospital Association, and Peter Pisters, the head of University Health Network, as well, to celebrate this significant investment in our front-line health care workers in the hospital system.

So how she somehow manages to twist that good news announcement into something else—I just am flabbergasted.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

M^{me} France Gélinas: The 1% increase to the budget of our hospitals will do nothing to cut wait times, and he knows it. It will do nothing to improve access. It will do nothing to open any new beds or re-hire the full-time nurses who lost their jobs. Nothing to stop the layoffs at hospitals in Windsor, Hamilton, North Bay—

Interjections.

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

M^{me} France Gélinas: The damage that has been done by the layoffs in hospitals like Windsor, Hamilton, North Bay and so many other communities—and it's not just us saying this. Nurses and physicians know that a 1% increase to our hospitals will mean more cuts coming this year. St. Joe's Healthcare in Hamilton says the Liberals' budget changes nothing. There is still a need to cut \$26 million and they still need to lay off 136 workers.

People want to know: Why is this Liberal government doing so little to fix the years of damage that they have done to Ontario hospitals?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: The Nurse Practitioners' Association of Ontario is thrilled with Premier Wynne's and Minister Hoskins' commitment to nurse practitioners.

The RPNAO, as well, the registered practical nurses, were encouraged to note some of the much-needed health care investments outlined in the 2016 provincial budget.

It's not just the \$1 billion of new money in health care overall. It's the \$12 billion over the next decade for new and improved hospitals, \$50 million more in annual funding to assist hospitals in maintaining their facilities in good repair and, of course, \$85 million for our community health centres and for our family health teams to invest in our nurse practitioners and other allied health professionals, and \$75 million over the next three years on top of the existing funding for a total of \$155 million over three years for hospices, which is something I'm sure she's heard a lot from her constituents about in terms of the importance of all of these investments.

STUDENT ASSISTANCE

Mr. Bas Balkissoon: My question is to the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities. Minister, post-secondary education is a big investment for Ontario families. Many students in Scarborough–Rouge River heavily rely on the Ontario student aid program to cover the costs of their post-secondary tuition. I understand that more than 380,000—more than half of all full-time students—received financial aid last year alone.

Many of my constituents were very happy about the many changes our government made to OSAP in last year's budget. I was particularly pleased to see that, as part of this year's budget, we are once again making monumental changes to the way student financial aid is delivered in Ontario.

Minister, can you please inform the members of the House how our government is making post-secondary education more affordable and accessible for students across Ontario in the 2016 budget?

Hon. Reza Moridi: I want to thank the member from Scarborough–Rouge River for that very timely question.

Our government strongly believes that all students, regardless of background or circumstances, should be able to afford to go to college or university in Ontario. That's why, as part of our 2016 budget, Ontario is moving forward with the single largest modernization of OSAP ever.

1120

We listened to student leaders and we are responding by combining existing assistance programs into a single, upfront grant that is more generous and more straightforward.

The new Ontario Student Grant is transformative. I am pleased to say that the new grant will make tuition free for low-income students in the province of Ontario. It will also ensure that mature students, married students and students who have been out of high school for more than four years will have access to this grant.

The Ontario Student Grant—

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

Mr. Bas Balkissoon: Thank you to the minister for that answer. It is reassuring to hear that our government continues to keep the best interests of Ontario students in mind at all times.

Minister, despite the significant improvements the province has made to student aid since 2003, there remains a direct correlation between family income levels and post-secondary education participation rates. I understand that the rates of participation in full-time post-secondary education increase with family income. Furthermore, because of the complexity of how OSAP is structured and delivered, many students and families do not have a clear understanding of how much financial aid is available to them. This has led to the perception that Ontario has the highest tuition in Canada.

Minister, can you please tell us more about how the new Ontario Student Grant will help more students access post-secondary education and understand how much financial aid they can receive?

Hon. Reza Moridi: Again, I want to thank the member for that question.

Our government is working hard to break down the barriers that are preventing Ontarians from getting a post-secondary education. That's why, by September 2017, all college, university and career college students who come from families with incomes of less than \$50,000 will have no provincial tuition debt. Not only that, the majority of students whose parents earn \$83,000 or less will also receive grants more than the cost of tuition.

Mr. Speaker, under the new Ontario Student Grant, more than 125,000 students will have more non-repayable aid, and approximately 250,000, or 80% of OSAP-eligible students, will have less debt than they would have under the current OSAP system. Not only is this a smart policy that will support economic growth; it is the right thing to do.

CLIMATE CHANGE

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: My question is to the environment minister.

No one believes the government's projections on cap-and-trade. We all know that the Liberals' cap-and-tax scheme will force Ontarians to pay much higher prices, much more than the Premier is willing to admit. In fact, long-term projections show that Ontario families can expect to pay nearly \$900 more every year just for gasoline and home heating alone. This Liberal scheme is just another example of how this government is making life more unaffordable for all Ontarians.

The minister had the chance to come clean with Ontarians last Thursday, but he chose not to. Why won't this minister tell the truth and finally reveal the true costs of the Liberals'—

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

Hon. Glen R. Murray: It's pretty fascinating watching the opposition on this. They have no position on climate change. They won't acknowledge that over half of the global GDP, half of the world's economy right

now, has a carbon price. They won't acknowledge that right now in British Columbia and Quebec the cost of living is going up at a slower rate than any other province and the Canadian average since they were the first to introduce a carbon tax. They won't acknowledge those simple facts.

I'm trying to figure out what their position is. It's a mixture of climate deniers and climate ditherers. They sort of tell you they care about climate change, but when it comes to actually telling us what they're going to do—we're about to put \$1.9 billion a year into people's heating systems, their cooling systems, their cars and their public transit to lower their cost of living.

What is the opposition going to do, other than dither?

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: I could tell you what the opposition is going to do, Speaker: We're going to put these guys to the door in 2018 and we're going to tell the truth.

Again, back to the minister: By next year alone, the government's own numbers show that each household in the province can, at least, pay nearly \$400 more every year—again, that's just for gas and home heating—and that still doesn't account for the long-term cost impact on families, which could more than double that number.

The truth is that the government's cap-and-tax scheme will increase the costs on everything, and what is it going to do? It will leave families, who are already struggling to make ends meet, with much higher prices for everyday essentials like groceries.

Speaker, why won't this minister finally admit that this government's real motive for cap-and-trade is to pay for years of Liberal scandal and mismanagement and not to protect the environment?

Hon. Glen R. Murray: Mr. Speaker, I just want to ask the member from Huron—Bruce one more time: Why, if that is true, if her fundamental assumption is true, do Quebec and BC, which have had carbon price—BC's is at twice the rate of Ontario's, approximately, and they've had the lowest cost of living. Why, Mr. Speaker? Because they're only looking at one side of the balance sheet. They don't realize all of the efficiency that this drives in the economy and that it overall lowers and slows the rate of growth in the cost of living. They don't look at the fact that we are about to make massive investments in people's vehicles, in their home heating/cooling systems, in insulation, and in public transit and that people will not have to use carbon-based fuels because we're going to switch. We're going to renovate and retrofit every building in Ontario.

The reason that we will not be thrown out in 2018—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Order. New question.

CLIMATE CHANGE

Mr. Peter Tabuns: My question is to the Minister of the Environment and Climate Change. Last week, I asked the minister whether revenues from the cap-and-trade

system would flow into a special purpose account and not into general government revenue.

Last Wednesday night, we got our answer. The money will flow into general revenues, and the rules for spending this money are so lax and flexible, it could be spent on pretty much anything.

Will the government tighten up the rules for spending the cap-and-trade revenues and place this money into a separate account that pays for verifiable greenhouse gas reductions?

Hon. Glen R. Murray: I look forward to working with the member from Toronto–Danforth because I know he cares about these issues very much.

All of this money, Mr. Speaker—

Mr. Gilles Bisson: But do you? That's the question?

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Timmins–James Bay.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: All of this money, Mr. Speaker, goes into a single account—reported in, reported out. We know that the Auditor General, as well as the Minister of the Environment and the entire Legislature, will pay very close attention as we publicly report. The Environmental Commissioner will also be reviewing that.

The legislation—if you compare our legislation to Quebec's or BC's or California's—is about the most stringent that you can.

We also have to report, Mr. Speaker, on four other things:

(1) The relative impact of every measure we take: how much greenhouse gas is being—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Answer.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: I'll wait for the supplementary, Mr. Speaker. I'm sure that there will be a similar question.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: In the fine print of the government's cap-and-trade bill, we learned that the so-called Greenhouse Gas Reduction Account is not actually a special purpose account. It is an accounting fiction, Speaker, that gives the government total flexibility in how it spends the cap-and-trade revenues. Programs only have to be indirectly related in some way to greenhouse gas reduction. The money can be used for expenditures that have already been made. It can even be used on programs that have already been funded.

The NDP supports cap-and-trade, so we want the system to be fair, transparent and effective. Will the government stop playing accounting games and make sure the cap-and-trade system revenue flows into a special purpose account?

1130

Hon. Glen R. Murray: It's very clear to me that the official opposition singularly doesn't believe you need a price on carbon to reduce emissions, which is a fantasy that only they hold. I'm still waiting for the third party to explain: What is your position on cap-and-trade? Do you support it? Do you not support it? Because, Mr. Speaker—

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

Hon. Glen R. Murray: —on page 278 of the budget, the exact expenditure program is laid out.

I'd just like to add five things that we have to do in this process that I think should give some comfort from this. The estimated amount of funding for each action if it is funded under the greenhouse gas reduction account—a specific account—has to be explained, allocated and demonstrated. There also has to be a timetable for implementation. There has to be an estimate of the potential greenhouse gas reductions achieved and the cost per tonne of potential reductions, a public progress report on all actions and a five-year action plan.

If the member can find a higher standard anywhere in the world for accountability and transparency—

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

CLIMATE CHANGE CHANGEMENT CLIMATIQUE

Mr. Grant Crack: My question is also to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change, who is very busy this morning.

Speaker, last year I brought forward a motion before this House to acknowledge that climate change is real, and the need to address it. I was proud to see that our government is once again leading in the fight against climate change.

Climate change is humanity's greatest challenge, and the debate on that is over. The impacts of climate change are expected to increase costs significantly in our lives, including human health, health care costs, tourism, infrastructure as a result of flooding and agriculture as a result of drought.

As part of our 2016 budget, we announced the details of the proposed cap-and-trade system, the cap-and-trade program, as well as introducing comprehensive legislation and posting a draft regulation for public input. Can the minister please speak to the strict rules and regulations that we've put forward on the reinvestment process?

Hon. Glen R. Murray: I want to thank the Legislature today for such great interest in this topic. It's reassuring to me that I sit in a Legislature where we may have different views but people do care about this.

Mr. Speaker, I just do want to take a second to talk about what the cost of inaction may be and what we're facing in Ontario. Southern Ontario, where the member for Huron–Bruce is, your constituency will be four degrees Celsius warmer than it is today. The entire southern half of the province—and every one degree Celsius means 7% more water is absorbed into the atmosphere. What that means to our capacity for farms and for the farm and agri sector is terrible. In northern Ontario, where much of our forestry industry is, it will be eight degrees Celsius warmer, and the impacts on forestry are devastating. The impacts on eight metres of our GO Transit line cost us \$600 million.

These costs will drive costs. A carbon price actually not only allows us to fund—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

Mr. Grant Crack: Thank you, Minister, for that answer. I know myself it's clear that the reinvestment of the proceeds will be done in a public and transparent manner and will only be used to deliver on combating climate change.

Personally, I'm concerned and I think I'm baffled on the position of the official opposition and the third party on climate change. Neither party and neither leader has offered a credible plan on climate change, as the minister has alluded to. It's our Premier, our minister and our government that are once again taking the lead on climate change and on policy issues in this province of Ontario. I understand that as part of our plan, we will be introducing a climate change action plan that will further detail how we will plan to reinvest proceeds and reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Can the minister inform the House on what we can expect from that action plan?

Hon. Glen R. Murray: Mr. Speaker, I just want to be clear about this: We have had a climate strategy. We have a climate bill now in the House. We have climate regulations that were released last Thursday. We had a budget that outlined it. We will soon have an action plan which will detail the next five years of how we will spend and what our objectives are to meet our 2020 target—which, because the “cap” part of cap-and-trade guarantees, we will get there. We also have more public reporting mechanisms on how each project and overall expenditures are measured.

Ma chère collègue la procureure générale l'a expliqué. C'est très, très facile. Elle a utilisé un mot en anglais : « polluter-pay ». This is basically a polluter-pay system, which means that if you don't pollute—and we'll help you do the things so you don't pollute—her position is the same one that Mr. DiCaprio expressed yesterday, which is: Within the next 30 years, we have to solve this problem or we won't be able to solve any others.

HYDRO RATES

Mr. John Yakabuski: My question is for the Minister of Energy. This month we in the official opposition have asked the reasonable request for this government to finally address in their 2016 budget unsustainable hydro rate increases. They have completely failed to do so.

To add salt to the ratepayers' wounds, government ministers were crowing about \$2 a month off ratepayers' hydro bills, despite the fact that they have increased more than \$1,000 under their tenure.

Speaker, will this government finally admit to the people of Ontario that their budget last week was nothing more than a token—a cup of coffee, shall we say—and that hydro rates will continue to become more unaffordable under the Liberal plan?

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: Mr. Speaker, they left us a \$20-billion loan to deal with, and we're dealing with that.

We recognize that the price of electricity can be difficult for those who pay a higher share of their income

towards the bill, particularly low-income families and seniors on a fixed income. That's why we launched the Ontario Electricity Support Program and we moved the debt retirement charge on January 1 of this year, saving many families \$430 annually.

We also know that bills can be even harder for families and seniors in rural and remote areas who heat with electricity or use medically assistive devices. That's why we doubled the monthly benefit these families can access, up to \$100.

It's important to remember that the average Ontario household is paying around \$5 per day, which represents incredible value for money, particularly given the 90% emissions-free system this pays for, a system which is no longer prone to the blackouts and—

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

Mr. John Yakabuski: More shell game gobble-dygook from the minister.

Back to the minister: The minister knows that this insulting stipend won't even begin to come close to covering the cost of the latest increases that went into effect on January 1. Ironically, with the toonie they receive they can treat themselves to a small cup of coffee, once a month—how fitting.

Ontarians need to hear about substantial relief in their electricity bills, yet the minister seems unwilling to acknowledge the harm he has caused families.

It is interesting that the minister has finally found out what a cup of coffee is worth, after increasing hydro bills by hundreds and hundreds of dollars. Will he stand up and acknowledge that their budget will do nothing for families' hydro bills, or does he simply not care?

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: As I was saying before, the government knows that there are families in Ontario that need assistance with their bill. That's why we provide the Ontario Energy and Property Tax Credit, the saveONenergy Home Assistance Program and the Northern Ontario Energy Credit, which can save families more than \$1,000 annually.

But as I was also saying, the average family in Ontario is paying about \$5 each day for clean, reliable electricity. For this price, Ontarians know they can light their homes, they can power their computers, they can charge their cellphones and they can run their dishwashers. This is very good value for money, especially when you consider that our system is no longer powered by the dirty coal-fired generation that used to make our kids sick—which they expanded—and now saves us \$4.4 billion annually in health care costs.

For \$5.26 per day, every Ontarian enjoys—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. I stand, you sit.

New question?

ASSISTANCE TO FARMERS

Mr. John Vanthof: My question is to the Premier. Early in your mandate you challenged the agri-food

sector to create 120,000 new jobs in Ontario. That's on top of the 750,000 jobs that already exist. Farmers are the foundation of the agri-food sector. They grow the crops and raise the livestock on which the sector depends. Farmers have repeatedly told you that the cap on risk management needs to be lifted so they can continue to drive the agricultural sector. But once again, in this budget, you have chosen not to do so.

Premier, how can you set targets for farmers and jobs while refusing to give them the tools to do so?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I know that the member opposite recognizes that we are the government that brought in the Risk Management Program and that we worked closely with farmers. The farmers have helped us design the risk management programs—because there are a number of them, as the member opposite knows.

We will continue to work with farmers. I know that the Minister of Agriculture and Food has a very close connection and, whether it's with the corn-fed beef farmers or the grain and oilseed farmers, where there are slightly different risk management programs, we'll continue to work with them.

In the meantime, we are investing in food processing. In the Jobs and Prosperity Fund, there's a particular carve-out for food processing in the agri-food industry. We know how important it is. We continue to invest and support growth in that sector, including, for example, craft brewers and fruit wines, who are going to be able to grow their businesses.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

Mr. John Vanthof: Once again to the Premier, it was farmers and the government that designed the Risk Management Program. They designed it to be bankable and predictable. May I also remind you that it was your government that capped it, making sure that it was no longer bankable and predictable? The Risk Management Program is one of the best programs this province has ever had, but it doesn't work when you go to the bank and you can't guarantee that your risk is covered.

The farmers have repeatedly told you that this is the way to make sure that we can continue, that they can continue to create the jobs on which this province depends. Agriculture is either number one or number two in this province, and this government refuses to acknowledge the farmers with the Risk Management Program. They need that cap lifted. Premier, why have you chosen, again, not to do so?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: We continue to make investments in rural Ontario. It's why we increased the budget for agriculture, food and rural affairs by \$138 million last year. As I said, we continue to work with the farm sector to make sure that we design those risk management programs, which we put in place in consultation with the sector, in response to the sector, in direct response to the need for farmers to have that predictability. We will continue to work with them.

We will also invest in their communities. We will also invest in the infrastructure that benefits businesses across

the province. We are putting more money in the Small Communities Fund, more money in the Ontario Community Infrastructure Fund. We're tripling the money in the Ontario Community Infrastructure Fund. You know that rural communities, farm communities, need those infrastructure investments as much as our urban communities do.

VISITOR

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The Minister of Finance on a point of order.

Hon. Charles Sousa: Mr. Speaker, I beg your indulgence and recognize a tremendous individual: a captain of industry, a major philanthropist in our community, a founder of a museum celebrating cultural roots in Ontario. He launched the Portuguese Canadian Walk of Fame, recognizing the likes of singer-songwriter Nelly Furtado; a major financier in our community, Michael Nobrega; and a pioneer, a businessman, as well as a community volunteer, my old man, Antonio Sousa. Ladies and gentlemen, please welcome Manuel DaCosta to this Legislature. Thank you.

CORRECTION OF RECORD

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): A point of order, Premier.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I just want to clarify and correct my record when I was talking about the shingles vaccine: All seniors between 65 and 70 years of age will be able to access the shingles vaccine free.

VISITOR

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): As indicated earlier, when he wasn't in the House, I would like to bring attention to a visitor: the former Speaker of the Ontario Legislature, Steve Peters. He and I are going to write a book.

There are no deferred votes. This House stands recessed until 1 p.m. this afternoon.

The House recessed from 1143 to 1300.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Arthur Potts: I'm delighted to introduce to the House my new legislative assistant, Kimberly Aherne, who is in the gallery on our side—and my head of staff for the constituency office, Tom McGee; welcome—for the member's statement that she drafted today.

Mr. Harinder S. Takhar: I would like to introduce Madeline Edwards, a resident of my riding, and also my constituency assistant, Bal.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Welcome. Glad you're here.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

RARE DISEASE DAY

Mr. Michael Harris: Today, I stand—and ask those in the House and those across the province—in recognition and support of Rare Disease Day.

Internationally, Rare Disease Day is celebrated the last day of February—this year, today, February 29, a rare date in itself. Today, participants from over 85 countries and regions are taking part in over 650 events, from symposiums and debates to marches, exhibitions and concerts. While we see today some acknowledgment from this government on the need to address the challenges faced by our rare-disease patients, it's my hope that through recognition of Rare Disease Day in Ontario, we can help move that acknowledgment to action and the answers sufferers deserve.

The truth is that while there are one in 12 Canadians affected by rare diseases, many in the public, the media and the government are unaware of the challenges patients face across the province to diagnosis and treatment.

There are actually over 7,000 recognized rare diseases and yet, despite those growing numbers, rare-disease patients are most often forced suffer in isolation, without the support, awareness and resources available to those with more commonly diagnosed diseases.

The recognition of Rare Disease Day is one way we can continue to work to build the support and awareness.

EMMA DONOGHUE

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I'm pleased to rise today to recognize Emma Donoghue, author, screenwriter and London West constituent. Londoners, and indeed all Canadians, are incredibly proud of Donoghue's Academy Award nomination for the screen version of her critically acclaimed novel *Room*.

This international bestseller, published in 2010, is a harrowing but uplifting exploration of a mother's love for her son. *Room* went on to be shortlisted for just about every literary prize there is, including the Man Booker. As a film, *Room* earned more accolades, including the People's Choice Award at TIFF, four Academy Award nominations and, last night, the Oscar for best actress.

Donoghue's extraordinary achievement is notable on several fronts. First, her literary and commercial success shows the importance of public investments to encourage the writing, publishing, distribution and promotion of books by Canadian authors and poets.

Second, TIFF provided a catalyst for *Room* to draw film audiences worldwide, reinforcing the value of the festival in profiling Canadian talent on an international stage and the economic impact of financial support for Ontario's film and cultural sector.

Third, with females making up only about 10% of movie screenwriters, and very few leading roles written for women, Donoghue's insistence on adapting *Room* for

the screen herself makes her a powerful role model for women in the film industry.

Speaker, I know I speak for all MPPs in saying to Emma that we celebrate your incredible talent, we congratulate you on your many achievements, and we can't wait for your next book, *The Wonder*, to be released on September 27.

WINTER STATIONS

Mr. Arthur Potts: These are sunny days in my riding of Beaches–East York. All along the Beach on Family Day weekend past, I had the pleasure of joining local councillor Mary-Margaret McMahon for the grand opening of our Winter Stations right across the boardwalks of Beaches–East York.

The event, in its second year, turns the Beach into a magical and inviting place in the winter by transforming the Beach's lifeguard stations into unique art exhibits. The art exhibits are selected by a jury with representation from architectural firms, the city of Toronto and consultants in the GTA. The competition this year almost doubled its participation, with 372 submissions from 49 different countries. Of those submissions, eight were chosen, the installations were built, and they will continue to be exhibited until March 20.

The Winter Stations have brought the boardwalk alive for a second year in a row with participating projects from across the province, including OCAD University, Ryerson and Laurentian University, and from other people around the world. These exhibits attract visitors to the Beaches–East York area and they give a great boost to local restaurants and other businesses. Mayor Tory visited this weekend, as did my sister and constituent Roberta Tevlin, who gave the permanent pilot project for a fire pit a two-thumbs-up.

Speaker, I would encourage all members of this House to take advantage of this wonderful opportunity to come down to my riding and experience these unique and wonderful artistic installations.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): She nailed her word count; that's for sure.

Further members' statements?

VIC HAYTER

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: Today I rise to remember and pay tribute to Vic Hayter. Vic passed away on February 23 at the age of 77. Vic was an incredibly successful businessman and community leader. He purchased his first hotel 43 years ago and went on to own a number of very successful businesses. In Stratford, he owned the Arden Park Hotel and the Festival Inn.

Vic will be remembered for his humble and hard-working spirit. He supported the Stratford Rotary Complex, the Stratford General Hospital, the Stratford-Perth Humane Society, Stratford Summer Music, church groups and many other community organizations. Vic's love for animals was clear to anyone who saw him with

his cocker spaniels. I will remember Vic as a well-respected member of the racehorse community.

I would like to extend my condolences to Vic's wife, Jo Ann; his children, Edward, Stephanie and Gregory, and their partners; his grandchildren; and all of his family and friends.

Today in Stratford, they honoured Vic at a funeral service at the Stratford Festival. I have no doubt that many are mourning his loss and sharing the special memories he has left behind. Vic will be remembered for all he did to make Stratford such a wonderful community.

PROTECTION OF PRIVACY

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: I rise today to discuss the issue of privacy and security when it comes to our personal data. A recent case in the States has raised issues around how important this issue is when it comes to our personal data with regard to our phones. In the US, there is a court case right now which is ordering Apple to unlock an encrypted phone. It raises questions around how important our personal information is. We acknowledge the importance of our personal information when it comes to our health information, but what about all of our digital communications?

We know, in a similar analogy, that tampering with mail is a serious federal offence. If you are to steal mail, it is an offence that can be tried by indictment, with up to 10 years in jail as a punishment. In fact, stopping mail with the intent to search it or to rob it is another indictable offence with up to life imprisonment, so it shows that as a society we acknowledge the importance of our communication being secure and private. In fact, I would make the argument that secure and private information in terms of our communication is linked to our freedom of thought and expression.

As a default, in our province, we don't have laws that clearly regulate and ensure protection for the public with respect to our communication, whether it is digital, through email or through texting or through other forms of communication. We need to look at this issue as a human rights issue, as a freedom of thought issue, and make it a default that our communications are encrypted and are secure so that we ensure the privacy of our information in much the same way we protect our information through the mail. Let's move forward in a new technological and digital era and address this issue.

BEVERLEY GORDON

Mrs. Cristina Martins: I am very proud to rise in the House today to recognize a fantastic individual from my great riding of Davenport, Beverley Gordon. Beverley's contribution to my riding and to our province can best be measured by the hundreds of Ontario families whose lives have been positively impacted through contact with her and with the Safehaven Project for Community

Living, located in Davenport, which she founded 25 years ago and of which she was CEO.

For those who have not had the privilege of visiting Safehaven, it is an invaluable organization that provides residential and respite services to families with children with multiple disabilities and complex medical needs. Beverley wholeheartedly believes that every child is special and can flourish with the support of their families and the community. Under her direction, Safehaven has enriched the quality of life and significantly extended the lifespans of medically challenged children in the province. Today, her vision has taken on a broader scope as other communities have set up services using the innovative Safehaven model.

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Beverley has lived her life with remarkable selflessness, dedicated to making life better for some of our most vulnerable citizens. I truly mean it when I say that I could not have been more proud to have been present as she received the Order of Ontario just a short few weeks ago. On behalf of the families whose lives you've changed for the better and those whom Safehaven will continue to help, thank you for all that you do, Beverley.

OXFORD BUSINESSES

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I'm pleased to rise today to report the results of my annual survey of Oxford businesses, and I want to thank everyone who took the time to respond.

Again this year, the cost of doing business in Ontario is a major concern. Some 92% of businesses said they would be negatively impacted by the mandatory pension plan, and 67% said the impact would be significant. All of the respondents said they had been impacted by increasing hydro costs, and 72% said the impact was significant. Businesses reported their biggest challenges were "rising government costs," "hydro rates" and "increasing costs." Last week, the government had an opportunity to address these concerns but instead presented a budget that will make it more expensive for both people and businesses in Ontario.

This year, I launched my business survey during the CFIB Red Tape Awareness Week, and it seems appropriate, given that 75% of respondents said that red tape has been increasing. Businesses reported that the cost of red tape is significant. One said it cost them tens of thousands of dollars; another said \$50,000 a year. One small business said that red tape has reduced their revenue by 25%. These businesses are facing real challenges and the government's red-tape-reduction photo ops haven't solved the problem.

I want to thank all the business operators who took the time to tell me about their company and to share the challenges that they are facing. We know how hard they work, and I hope that the government will listen to their concerns so that we can create a climate where our businesses can succeed.

MADELINE EDWARDS

Mr. Harinder S. Takhar: We all know that Ontario's highest official honour, the Order of Ontario, is awarded to exceptional individuals who have benefited other individuals by excelling in any field. It is an honour and a privilege to talk about Madeline Edwards, who has been awarded the Order of Ontario for 2015 and who is an outstanding constituent of my riding of Mississauga–Erindale.

Madeline Edwards is known for her staunch advocacy for social justice. As we celebrate Black History Month, it is important for us to celebrate the contributions and extraordinary work that people like Madeline Edwards perform day in, day out.

Madeline has been a long-time leader and a voice for the community. She was a founding member of the Mississauga and area chapter of the Congress of Black Women of Canada, an organization dedicated to improving the lives of black women and their families. She created a program called Suffering in Silence to support women who remain in abusive relationships due to poverty and unemployment. This program formed the basis of a non-profit housing complex where the victims of abuse could find a secure and safe place to live.

I am very proud of Madeline's work and contributions to our city and our province. On a personal note, I want to thank her for her continued support, advice and advocacy on behalf of my constituents. Let me take this opportunity to congratulate Madeline Edwards—she is sitting right there in the east gallery—for receiving the province's highest honour, the Order of Ontario. I wish her all the best in her future endeavours.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Congratulations.

GRANDVIEW CHILDREN'S CENTRE

Mr. Joe Dickson: I'm in the House today to acknowledge Grandview Children's Centre. It's the only children's centre, treatment-wise, in Durham region, providing expert paediatric treatment and rehabilitation services to well over 5,000 children and youth with special needs.

Grandview has been operating in the region of Durham for some 63 years, and its headquarters are in Oshawa. On November 20, 2015, Minister of Children and Youth Services Tracy MacCharles, Durham MPP Granville Anderson and myself joined Ajax's mayor, Steve Parish, and all members of Ajax council when they announced that the town was giving Grandview Children's Centre a five-acre parcel of land on Harwood Avenue North to build a new \$44-million, multistory, 68,000-square-foot facility. Well done, Ajax.

This is great news, as I have been working with Grandview as an MPP and an Ajax councillor since approximately 2005. I was honoured to be the presenter of the very first half-million-dollar capital grant cheque to them for redevelopment and programs in 2007.

This past July, our Ontario government, through the Ministry of Children and Youth Services, agreed to

provide \$850,000 for critical building-renewal projects at Grandview, again from our provincial government.

I am very pleased that our newly tabled budget includes an investment strategy for children in the province, as well as an investment of \$333 million over five years in autism services.

The executive director of Grandview, Lorraine Sunstrum-Mann, has spoken very highly of the investments the province is making.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

RARE DISEASE DAY ACT, 2016

LOI DE 2016 SUR LE JOUR DES MALADIES RARES

Mr. Harris moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 174, An Act to proclaim Rare Disease Day /
Projet de loi 174, Loi proclamant le Jour des maladies rares.

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. Michael Harris: Today I introduced An Act to proclaim Rare Disease Day to recognize the last day of February in each year as Rare Disease Day here in Ontario. A rare disease is any disease that affects a small percentage of the population. According to the Canadian Organization for Rare Disorders, one in 12 Canadians are affected by a rare disease.

While a Rare Disease Day is officially recognized throughout Europe and the United States at the end of February, this bill calls for the government to recognize the last day of February in each year as Rare Disease Day here in Ontario.

PETITIONS

AIR QUALITY

Mr. Monte McNaughton: I have a petition addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

“Whereas Ontario's Drive Clean Program was implemented only as a temporary measure to reduce high levels of vehicle emissions and smog; and

“Whereas vehicle emissions have declined so significantly from 1998 to 2010 that they are no longer among the major domestic contributors of smog in Ontario; and

“Whereas the overwhelming majority of reductions in vehicle emissions were, in fact, the result of factors other than the Drive Clean program, such as tighter manufacturing standards for emission-control technologies; and

“Whereas from 1999 to 2010 the percentage of vehicles that failed emissions testing under the Drive Clean program steadily declined from 16% to 5%; and ...

“Whereas the new Drive Clean test has caused the failure rate to double in less than two months as a result of technical problems with the new emissions testing method; ...

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

“That the Minister of the Environment must take immediate steps to phase out Ontario’s Drive Clean program.”

I proudly support this petition and send it over with page Julia.

HEALTH CARE FUNDING

Mr. John Vanthof: “Petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

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

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

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

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

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

I wholeheartedly agree and send it down with page Delaney.

LUNG HEALTH

Mrs. Cristina Martins: I have a petition that’s addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

“Whereas lung disease affects more than 2.4 million people in the province of Ontario, more than 570,000 of whom are children;

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“Of the four chronic diseases responsible for 79% of deaths (cancers, cardiovascular diseases, lung disease and diabetes) lung disease is the only one without a dedicated province-wide strategy;

“In the Ontario Lung Association report, Your Lungs, Your Life, it is estimated that lung disease currently costs the Ontario taxpayers more than \$4 billion a year in direct and indirect health care costs, and that this figure is estimated to rise to more than \$80 billion seven short years from now;

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

“To allow for deputations on MPP Kathryn McGarry’s private member’s bill, Bill 41, Lung Health Act, 2014,

which establishes a Lung Health Advisory Council to make recommendations to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care on lung health issues and requires the minister to develop and implement an Ontario Lung Health Action Plan with respect to research, prevention, diagnosis and treatment of lung disease; and

“Once debated at committee, to expedite Bill 41, Lung Health Act, 2014, through the committee stage and back to the Legislature for third and final reading; and to immediately call for a vote on Bill 41 and to seek royal assent immediately upon its passage.”

I agree with this petition, will affix my name and send it to the table with page Ryan.

RENEWABLE ENERGY

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: This is a “Petition to Support Bill 150, Energy Referendum Act, 2015.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the Green Energy Act, 2009 has been a major contributor in recent years to the skyrocketing and unsustainable increases in hydro bills and has created an environment where large-scale renewable energy projects are becoming more prominent in all areas of the province;

“Whereas these large-scale renewable energy projects can have significant impact on property values, tourism, wildlife population and the very landscape in the communities where they exist;

“Whereas there have been instances where local municipal councils have allowed large-scale renewable energy projects into their communities against the popular will of residents; and

“Whereas local residents will be the ones who are most impacted as a result of large-scale renewable energy projects being developed in their communities and hence should be the ones who have the final say regarding the issue;

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

“That members of the Legislative Assembly vote to support MPP John Yakabuski’s private member’s bill, Bill 150, Energy Referendum Act, 2015, which would mandate that local municipalities hold a referendum before large-scale renewable energy projects are approved so that residents are the ones who decide if these projects will go forward.”

I agree with this petition and I send it down with page Charlotte.

HEALTH CARE

Ms. Jennifer K. French: I have a petition here from people across Ontario.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

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

“(1) Reverse the cuts to health care;

“(2) Return to the bargaining table with the OMA ... to resume negotiations for a fair physician services agreement;

“(3) Work with all front-line health care provider groups to develop plans to create a sustainable health care system for the people of Ontario.”

I agree with this. I affix my name to it and will send it with page Sayeem.

WATER FLUORIDATION

Mrs. Cristina Martins: I have a petition here addressed to the Ontario Legislative Assembly.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

I agree with this petition, will affix my name and send it to the table with page Owen.

BEER SALES

Mr. Norm Miller: I have a petition with regard to beer sales in small towns. It reads:

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the changes to beer sales in the 2015 provincial budget only allow for grocery stores to qualify in population centres of over 30,000 people;

“Whereas all consumers, including those living in rural and northern Ontario, will pay their share of the new \$100-million-per-year beer tax;

“Whereas many of Ontario’s craft breweries are located in communities of less than 30,000 people—four of which operate in such locations in Parry Sound—Muskoka;

“Whereas access for craft breweries to sell beer in grocery stores will provide the opportunity for increased sales and will support local jobs;

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

“That the Ontario government do away with the 30,000 population restriction so people living in rural and northern Ontario have the opportunity to purchase beer in their local grocery stores.”

Mr. Speaker, I have signed and support this petition.

GASOLINE PRICES

M^{me} France Gélinas: I’d like to thank Sharon Simpson from my riding for this petition. It goes as follows:

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

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

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

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

They petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to “Mandate the Ontario Energy Board to monitor the price of gasoline across Ontario in order to reduce price volatility and unfair regional price differences while encouraging competition.”

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

PUBLIC TRANSIT

Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas there are critical transportation infrastructure needs for the province;

“Whereas giving people multiple avenues for their transportation needs takes cars off the road;

“Whereas public transit increases the quality of life for Ontarians and helps the environment;

“Whereas the constituents of Orléans and east Ottawa are in need of greater transportation infrastructure;

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

“Support the Moving Ontario Forward plan and the Ottawa LRT phase II construction, which will help address the critical transportation infrastructure needs of Orléans, east Ottawa,” and our wonderful province of Ontario.

It gives me great pleasure to sign this petition and give it to page Erin.

EHLERS-DANLOS SYNDROME

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

“Whereas the Canada Health Act requires provinces to fund medically necessary treatment for Canadians; and

“Whereas a growing number of people in Ontario suffering from Ehlers-Danlos syndrome (EDS) have to seek out-of-country treatment at their own expense because doctors in Ontario don’t have the knowledge or skills to understand EDS symptoms and perform the required delicate and complicated surgeries; and

“Whereas those EDS victims who can’t afford the expensive treatment outside of Ontario are forced to suffer a deteriorating existence and risk irreversible tissue and nerve damage; and

“Whereas EDS victims suffer severe dislocations, chronic pain, blackouts, nausea, migraines, lost vision, tremors, bowel and bladder issues, heart problems, mobility issues, digestive disorders, severe fatigue and many others resulting in little or very poor quality of life; and

“Whereas despite Ontario Ministry of Health claims that there are doctors in Ontario who can perform surgeries on EDS patients, when surgery is recommended the Ontario referring physicians fail to identify any Ontario neurosurgeon willing or able to see and treat the patient;

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

“Require the Minister of Health to provide the names of Ontario neurosurgeons who can—and will—perform surgeries on EDS patients with equivalent or identical skills to the EDS neurosurgeon specialists in the United States, and meet the Canada Health Act’s requirement to afford equal access to medical treatment for patients, regardless of their ability to pay for out-of-country services.”

I fully support it, will affix my name and send it with page Ryan.

FINANCEMENT DES SOINS DE SANTÉ

M. Gilles Bisson: J’ai des pétitions ici en français, comme en anglais, sur le même sujet. Je vais lire la section française qui dit :

« Alors que la croissance et le vieillissement de la population de l’Ontario pèsent de plus en plus sur le système de santé financé par l’État; et

« Alors que depuis le mois de février 2015, le gouvernement de l’Ontario a diminué de près de 7 % les dépenses de service des médecins de manière unilatérale, lesquelles couvrent tous les soins donnés aux patients par les professionnels de la santé; et

« Alors que les décisions que prend aujourd’hui l’Ontario auront un impact sur l’accès des patients à des soins de qualité dans les années à venir, ces coupes budgétaires menaceront l’accès aux soins de qualité axés

sur le patient dont les Ontariens ont besoin et qu’ils attendent.

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« Nous, les signataires, demandons à l’Assemblée législative de l’Ontario que :

« Le ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée revienne à la table des négociations avec les médecins de l’Ontario pour s’efforcer par l’entremise d’un arbitrage par médiation de trouver un accord équitable qui protège les soins de qualité axés sur le patient que les familles ontariennes méritent. »

Je donne ça à Charlotte, and ask her to table that.

LUNG HEALTH

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

“Whereas lung disease affects more than 2.4 million people in the province of Ontario, more than 570,000 of whom are children and youth living with asthma;

“Of the four chronic diseases responsible for 79% of deaths (cancers, cardiovascular diseases, lung disease and diabetes) lung disease is the only one without a dedicated province-wide strategy;

“In the Ontario Lung Association report, *Your Lungs, Your Life*, it is estimated that lung disease currently costs the Ontario taxpayers more than \$4 billion a year in direct and indirect health care costs, and that this figure is estimated to rise to more than \$80 billion seven short years from now;

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

“To allow for deputations on MPP Kathryn McGarry’s private member’s bill, Bill 41, Lung Health Act, 2014, which establishes a Lung Health Advisory Council to make recommendations to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care on lung health issues and requires the minister to develop and implement an Ontario Lung Health Action Plan with respect to research, prevention, diagnosis and treatment of lung disease; and

“Once debated at committee, to expedite Bill 41, Lung Health Act, 2014, through the committee stage and back to the Legislature for third and final reading; and to immediately call for a vote on Bill 41 and to seek royal assent immediately upon its passage.”

I will sign this petition and send it to the Chair.

HEALTH CARE FUNDING

Mr. Norm Miller: I have a health care petition and it reads:

“Petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

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

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

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

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

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

I’ve signed this petition, Mr. Speaker.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

JOBES FOR TODAY AND TOMORROW ACT (BUDGET MEASURES), 2016

LOI DE 2016 FAVORISANT LA CRÉATION D’EMPLOIS POUR AUJOURD’HUI ET DEMAIN (MESURES BUDGÉTAIRES)

Mr. Sousa moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 173, An Act to implement Budget measures and to enact or amend various statutes / Projet de loi 173, Loi visant à mettre en oeuvre les mesures budgétaires et à édicter ou à modifier diverses lois.

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

Hon. Charles Sousa: Mr. Speaker, I’ll be sharing my time with my parliamentary assistant, the member from York South–Weston.

I am pleased to stand today in the House for the second reading of Bill 173, the Jobs for Today and Tomorrow Act (Budget Measures), 2016.

I’m proud to report that the 2016 Ontario budget, and hence the content of this bill, is the result of extensive consultations with the people of Ontario. In fact, the government conducted pre-budget consultations across the province. This included 20 in-person pre-budget sessions in 13 cities with more than 700 people. It included two telephone town halls reaching more than 52,000 Ontarians. It included receiving 500 written submissions, and it included online consultations with more than 6,500 users through the Budget Talks website. Ontarians let us know how they felt about the subjects that mattered most to them, like jobs, education, health care and the environment, and we listened. The result is this budget, a budget that continues this government’s plan to create jobs and grows Ontario’s economy.

Like many jurisdictions around the world, Ontario was hit hard by the 2008 global economic downturn. We did not wait to invest or address the challenges to enable growth, nor did we wait for the economy to magically improve. Instead, our government put a plan in place to protect and create jobs, to grow the economy and attract foreign investment, and to balance the budget by 2017-18

in a deliberate and responsible way. The people of Ontario embraced this challenge. This plan is working.

Today, Ontario is a leader in growth and job creation. For the last two years, Ontario has attracted more foreign direct investment than any other province or US state, and we continue to meet and exceed our deficit targets. As announced in the 2016 budget, the deficit for 2015-16 is forecast to be \$5.7 billion, which is \$2.8 billion lower than the forecast in the 2015 budget, and it’s \$1.8 billion lower than the amended projection laid out in the 2015 Ontario Economic Outlook and Fiscal Review. Our government is projecting a further reduction in the deficit to \$4.3 billion in 2016-17, and we are coming and announcing a balanced budget in 2017-18 and 2018-19.

We sow what we reap, and our economy is growing. The Ministry of Finance is forecasting growth in Ontario’s real GDP of 2.5% in 2015 and 2.2% in 2016. Our economic growth is now outpacing national growth and is expected to continue being among the strongest in Canada over the next two years.

And a further piece of good news: A key indication of fiscal sustainability is in regards to management of the debt. Our net debt-to-GDP is expected to peak at 39.6% in 2015-16, remain level in 2016-17 and decline in 2017-18. Furthermore, we are creating jobs, Mr. Speaker—lots of jobs. More than 600,000 jobs have been created since the recessionary lows in 2009. Ontario is projected to create more than 300,000 additional jobs by the end of 2019, which would bring total job creation to more than 900,000 net new jobs over a 10-year period.

But our work is not finished. Today we face new challenges: the price of oil and the Canadian dollar have fallen considerably. Once again, Ontario will embrace these challenges. These challenges also provide our manufacturers, our exporters and private sectors with opportunities for growth and job creation.

This government will continue to beat its fiscal targets while investing in the economy, people and a healthy, clean and prosperous low-carbon future. These investments will help enhance the public services on which Ontarians rely, as well as stimulate growth and investments like building and revitalizing our public infrastructure, which are critical to strengthening Ontario’s economy and creating jobs for today and tomorrow.

As you know, Mr. Speaker, the government previously committed to investing more than \$134 billion over 10 years in priority projects such as roads, bridges, public transit, hospitals and schools. We’re building on this plan with an additional \$3 billion in commitment, bringing the government’s total infrastructure investment to more than \$137 billion over the next 10 years. That will result in about \$160 billion over 12 years, starting in 2014-15, which is the largest investment in public infrastructure in Ontario’s history ever. These planned investments would support more than 110,000 jobs each year on average.

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That’s not all that we’re doing to help the economy grow and create jobs. We’re also forecasting and fostering a more dynamic and innovative business environ-

ment. Our plan continues to reduce business costs, leverage investments through strategic partnerships, help businesses go global and strengthen the financial services sector.

We're also developing a sharing economy strategy and renewing the province's social enterprise strategy.

Our government continues to roll out our Business Growth Initiative. This is a five-year, \$400-million strategy to accelerate the province's shift towards a high-growth innovation economy and help businesses scale up. It will also modernize the regulatory system and lower the cost of doing business in the province.

Mr. Speaker, we're planning for the jobs of the future. The global economy is moving towards pricing carbon. This is a key step in combatting climate change, and Ontario is taking action. Last week, this government introduced the proposed Climate Change Mitigation and Low-carbon Economy Act. That bill sets the groundwork for a cap-and-trade program to help Ontario meet its greenhouse gas reduction targets. Together with last week's bill, the 2016 budget sets the stage for Ontario to auction carbon allowances in 2017.

A cap-and-trade program would reward innovative companies and ensure that households and businesses thrive within the transition to a low-carbon economy. All proceeds from the cap-and-trade program, projected to be \$1.9 billion in 2017-18, would be used exclusively to fund initiatives that reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

These are just a few aspects of our economic plan to create jobs today and jobs for tomorrow. They include a plan to invest in people's talents and skills, to help all Ontarians reach their full potential and succeed in an evolving economy; a plan to move people and goods quickly and efficiently to attract private investment and to help people in their everyday lives by making the largest investment in public infrastructure in our history; a plan to create a dynamic, supportive environment where businesses thrive; and a plan to help strengthen retirement security for Ontarians.

To speak further on the 2016 Ontario budget and Bill 173, the Jobs for Today and Tomorrow Act (Budget Measures), 2016—a mouthful, Mr. Speaker—I call upon my colleague, parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Finance, the all-great Laura Albanese.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I'm pleased to recognize the member for York South–Weston.

Mrs. Laura Albanese: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the minister.

I am pleased to have the opportunity to stand today and add my support for the second reading of Bill 173, the Jobs for Today and Tomorrow Act (Budget Measures), 2016. As you know, Mr. Speaker, the budget measures bill contains a wide variety of initiatives and amendments. While the bill contains a number of important initiatives and amendments, I'd like to take the opportunity to provide some background for the proposed changes in two specific areas.

This government's plan to grow the economy and create jobs includes investing in people's talents and

skills. High-quality education and training, starting from the earliest years and continuing throughout a person's working life, are what enable Ontarians to acquire and retain good jobs, while adapting and thriving in today's demanding and competitive global environment.

We have been successful on many fronts. For the early years, our changes are leading to better outcomes for children and a more seamless experience for families. We have modernized the legislative and regulatory framework for child care. We have enhanced program quality, consistency and access in child care and early years programs. This reflects our focus on safe and healthy child development and improved supports for parents and families. And of course, since September 2014, we have made full-day kindergarten available to every four- and five-year-old in Ontario.

We continue to take steps to invest in people's talents and skills. In the 2016 budget, our government is proposing to modernize student financial assistance to make post-secondary education more accessible and affordable. We are proposing to create a simple, integrated, upfront grant, the Ontario Student Grant, starting in the 2017-18 school year. Under the proposed system, average tuition will be free for students with financial need from families with incomes of \$50,000 or lower. Tuition will also be more affordable for middle-income families. More than 50% of students from families with incomes of \$83,000 or less will receive non-repayable grants in excess of average college or university tuition. No Ontario student will receive less through the Ontario Student Grant than they are currently eligible for through the Ontario tuition grant.

Students in families with annual incomes of less than \$50,000 will have no provincial student debt. The government will also expand financial support for mature and married students. Access to interest-free and low-cost loans for middle- and upper-income families will be increased by reducing their expected parental contributions. Most students will have less debt than they would under the current system, and the maximum OSAP debt level will be capped at \$10,000 annually for higher-income families.

As part of these changes, the government is proposing to discontinue the Ontario tuition and education tax credits, beginning in the fall of 2017. The proposed changes to the Taxation Act, 2007, are part of Bill 173.

All additional revenue from eliminating these tax credits would be reinvested to support the new Ontario Student Grant or other post-secondary education, training and youth jobs programs. We are proposing these changes because grants are more effective than tax credits at targeting financial support to students with the greatest financial need and providing support upfront.

Ontario's tuition tax credit is calculated based on eligible tuition and related fees, as well as fees for certain occupational trade or professional examinations. The education tax credit provides set amounts for non-tuition expenses for each month of full-time or part-time post-secondary studies. Students who cannot use all their

tuition and education tax credits for a particular year may transfer them to a parent, grandparent, spouse or common law partner up to an annual maximum. Credits that are not used or transferred are carried forward to future tax years.

The timing of the proposed elimination of the tuition and education tax credits would correspond to the introduction of the Ontario Student Grant. Ontario students would be able to claim the tuition tax credit for eligible tuition fees paid for studies up to and including September 4, 2017, and would be able to claim all accumulated education tax credits for months of studies before September 2017. The eligible portion of 2017 tax credits would be transferable to a qualifying family member.

Tax filers who live in Ontario on December 31, 2017, and have unused tuition and education tax credits available for carry forward would still be able to claim them in future years. Tax filers who move to Ontario from other provinces after December 2017, however, would no longer be able to claim their accumulated tuition and education tax credits in Ontario.

These changes will provide students who have the greatest financial need with better access to grants upfront when they need them. They will provide them with the opportunities and tools they need to succeed in the knowledge-based economy.

Another proposed amendment in Bill 173, the Jobs for Today and Tomorrow Act (Budget Measures), 2016, relates to the changes we have been making to beverage alcohol retailing in the province of Ontario.

The government has delivered on its promise to introduce the sale of beer in grocery stores. Sixty locations across Ontario are now selling beer. Up to 150 stores will be able to sell beer by May 1, 2017, and up to 450 stores could eventually be approved to do so. Building on that progress, we are moving forward with expanding wine sales to further improve consumer choice and convenience.

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By the fall of this year, 2016, up to 70 grocery stores across the province will be authorized to sell wine and beer together, through newly allocated authorizations. Eventually, up to 150 grocery stores will be approved to sell wine from Ontario across Canada and around the world. As well, up to 150 of the province's private winery retail outlets, now located at grocery stores, will have the opportunity to operate their store inside the grocery space, enabling customers to buy wine with their groceries. In total, up to 300 grocery stores, both large chains and independent stores, will sell wine inside their stores.

It is important to note that the government also continues to carefully regulate the sale of alcohol. The same requirements for safe and responsible retailing of beer in grocery stores will apply to wine. This includes designated sales areas, restricted hours of sale, and rigorous training for grocery store staff.

The government is proposing changes to the Alcohol and Gaming Regulation and Public Protection Act, 1996,

as part of Bill 173, the Jobs for Today and Tomorrow Act (Budget Measures), 2016. These proposed changes include establishing a definition of "authorized grocery store" and provide for the collection of tax in those stores, and increasing the basic tax on non-Ontario wine purchased at winery retail stores by one percentage point in each of June 2016, April 2017, April 2018 and April 2019.

These are just a few of the changes proposed in Bill 173. This bill continues the government's plan to build Ontario up and deliver on its number one priority, which is growing the economy and creating jobs. This bill ensures that we continue to build Ontario up by investing in our future. That is why I ask for the support of this House in passing this important legislation, Bill 173, Jobs for Today and Tomorrow Act (Budget Measures), 2016.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Monte McNaughton: I'm happy to rise today to add some input into the government's budget that they presented last week.

Obviously, our leader, Patrick Brown, and our finance critic, Mr. Fedeli, put three demands out in advance of the budget. Clearly, the government wasn't interested in consulting the other parties, let alone consulting anyone else in the province of Ontario.

What I want to highlight today is what I think is the greatest risk to economic prosperity in the province from this budget, and that is the Liberals' \$308-billion debt that they are burdening future generations in this province with. And \$308 billion, if the finance minister isn't aware, represents over \$22,000 for every man, woman and child in this province. I think of my family—my young daughter, my wife and myself—and that's \$66,000 worth of debt. That's just the provincial portion that our family is responsible for. Then you take into account the burden that the federal government is putting on families, with their massive spending programs and the debt that's happening in Ottawa. So I caution the government to really think seriously about the burden. It's easy for them to sit here at Queen's Park in what I like to call "the Queen's Park bubble," but they have to realize the impact they're putting on families across the province.

Just in closing, one of the asks that our leader, Patrick Brown, had in our PC caucus was to make energy more affordable. That is something that we needed to see in the budget. Clearly we're hearing from constituents—I know we are, in my riding of Lambton–Kent–Middlesex—who are really having a tough time keeping their payments going so they can stay in their house.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

M^{me} France Gélinas: We, too, had been clear ahead of the budget: "Let's make sure that we listen to what Ontarians are telling us." Ontarians have been saying in every part of the province that they have a hard time making ends meet, and that one of the reasons they have a hard time making ends meet is the price of electricity. But yet, we see the Liberal government continuing to sell

Hydro One, and we all know privatization will lead to even higher hydro bills. That makes life hard, no matter where you live.

Then we saw this over-four-cents-a-litre increase for the price of gasoline. I represent the riding of Nickel Belt; I understand that if you increase the price of gas, people will look for other means of transportation, but there are no other means of transportation in Nickel Belt. You could increase the price of gasoline, and it doesn't matter. There still aren't going to be alternate modes of transportation.

Then there is the 1% increase to our hospitals. You have to realize that right now, our hospitals cancel elective surgeries and admit people in hallways and in all sorts of areas that were never meant to be patient rooms. They have long wait-lists. Well, the 1% increase to our hospitals means that all of this stays. It doesn't have an opportunity to get better; it just stays where it is. But there are some serious gaps that need to be addressed so that we have better access and we have quality of care in your hospital. That is not part of the budget, which means that people will continue to wait, will continue to have their surgeries canceled and will continue to be denied access, and that's wrong.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Bas Balkissoon: I'm thankful to be given this opportunity to add a few of my comments to this debate.

This morning in question period I had the opportunity to ask the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities about the budget and the tuition fee changes that have been made to the budget. My colleague from York South–Weston covered it extensively in her remarks, but I just want to reiterate that the changes the government is making in the OSAP program are significant for my residents, because you had to apply for OSAP under I think 12 or 14 different streams. It is now reduced to four, and it's simplified.

The other problem is a lot of parents and students did not know how much they would receive until they actually applied. Now it is very easy. You know up front, based on your family income, what is your opportunity.

In my riding, which is a low-income neighbourhood on the eastern part, I will tell you that that makes a huge difference to the residents, because parents used to be scared that they would not be able to afford to send their kids to college or university. Now they know they don't have to worry about that anymore. They can work with their children while they're in high school and encourage them that the opportunity is greater than it used to be, rather than saying to them, "I don't think we can afford university or community college for you." So I think that's great. My riding is going to benefit from it, and I think it is significant.

The other thing is, I was at a Rotary Club business meeting on Friday morning about the budget, and I was very impressed that the community is behind our government on the cap-and-trade program. We've spent many years trying to protect the Rouge River in my riding; that is a significant resource of that riding.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: I rise to give a few comments on what I heard from the members opposite on this budget.

It's interesting to me that a reference was made to the 2008 recession, when things were certainly not good in this province. It went into the winter, and I know our own business had a downturn in business. Those are the facts. That's the first time we ever laid off our staff, that winter. But yet, this government kept spending and they've continued on that course. Even though they project their deficit to be eliminated in the next couple of years, the debt is projected to be over \$300 billion this year. That's nothing to be proud of. In fact, I'm sure that people who are in that business of finance will say that that is something that has to be brought under control. We cannot continue to spend like that and put it toward this debt.

1400

I also made mention of the cap-and-trade tax that they want to bring in. I do get worried when this government fools around with anything to do with energy. That's what is going on at this time with this cap-and-trade tax. We know what the green energy file has done to this province. It has done nothing but raise costs to where we have people in all sectors of our life—businesses and private—having difficulties with their hydro bills. That's going to continue to go up. So when this government has anything to do with energy, I certainly get nervous. I think the people of Ontario are going to get nervous about that, too, because, from their previous record on how they have failed on these different files from the past, it gives us no certainty of the future.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): That concludes the time that we have for questions and comments for this round.

I return to the member for York South–Weston, who has two minutes to reply.

Mrs. Laura Albanese: I wanted to point out that we have a plan to reduce our debt and that we have stayed the course. Debt is one measure of fiscal performance; a better indicator is net debt to GDP, which offers a more complete picture of an economy and its ability to manage the debt. Our debt to GDP is forecasted to peak this year, as the members know, and it's beginning to level off. We are committed to reducing Ontario's net debt-to-GDP ratio to the pre-recession level of 27%.

The size of our economy, compared to the provincial debt, is more than reasonable. We have borrowed \$25 billion—not million; billion—less than our original forecast due to our responsible fiscal management. We have issued more bonds to lock in lower interest rates, adding stability to our plan to reduce our debt.

Ontario is recognized as a secure place to invest all around the world. We're recognized as a large and well-diversified economy, with a significant fiscal policy flexibility, a large and productive tax base, and we have no difficulty accessing capital markets.

Our plan to eliminate the deficit is working on target and on schedule: a \$5.7-billion deficit this year; \$4.3

billion for 2016-17; and a return to balance for 2017-18, as planned. The deficit is almost \$2 billion lower than it was in November—just three months ago—and not one cent of that came from the Hydro One IPO.

I also want to point out that the rating agencies have a very positive opinion of Ontario. Moody's, for example, has confirmed that the 2016 budget stays on track to balance the budget.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate? I'm pleased to recognize the member for Nipissing.

Applause.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: The sound of one hand clapping: I always enjoy starting off like that, Speaker. I appreciate the opportunity to rise to speak to this bill, Bill 173.

I look forward to the next hour we have together. I'm looking forward to countering some of the things you may have heard, some of the spin you've heard from this government. Because, time and time again, we hear grandiose announcements from this government without any plan whatsoever. In some cases, there's no intention whatsoever to deliver a plan and to deliver on the results they talk about.

We've seen that over and over. I'm going to give you a few examples, because the 2016 budget is absolutely no different. The contents, again, show that this government is all about shifting your direction one way while they offer a different answer on the other side. That's what it's all about. We call it sometimes the "shiny bauble": Look over here at this exciting thing so they cannot talk about the things that affect the families the most. They're all about aspiration, but never, ever, ever about the actual operation. They're good at giving a promise, but never worrying about the actual details or delivering on that promise.

I know that Premier Wynne, when she was first elected, preached openness and transparency, but she also couldn't shut down the gas plant scandal hearings fast enough, the moment they won a majority government. Of course, we now know that criminal charges have since resulted from the information uncovered in those hearings that were not finished yet. She made a political deal with the NDP in 2013 to prop up her government with a pledge to reduce auto insurance premiums by 15% and didn't even get halfway to that target, because that was a "stretch goal," is what she ended up calling it. So my point again, as we build a base here for the debate we're going to have, is that it's always about aspiration; it's never about operation.

We saw that again with the Ontario Retirement Pension Plan. The Premier ignored her own internal analysis and advice. The complexity and the costs began to mount, and the chorus of opposition from job creators began to mount, even though the Liberals pushed forward on this as a means to an end. They have now realized they're in over their head, they are delaying implementation by a year, and they've been forced to ask their federal cousins to come in and help them save face. But the finance minister has insisted that he'll balance the budget

by 2017-18, and—we heard today—he continues to do so, despite the Financial Accountability Officer stating that, in all likelihood, he won't.

The Premier stood in front of a "beer in grocery stores" banner last year to announce that she was selling off hydro. That's part of the "look over here while I'm really doing this over here." In the 2014 election, of course, we remember the Premier promised jobs, not cuts. Well, today, we're seeing nurses being laid off by the hundreds across the province. The list of examples about aspiration and announcements versus operations and the details—it's a stark contrast.

After all three parties finished touring the province and listening to the people's concerns, the Ontario PC caucus presented three requests for this budget. The first was to include a credible plan to make energy affordable in Ontario. That included the halting of any further sale of Hydro One. Our second ask was to include a plan to properly manage Ontario's health care system, including reversing the current and planned cuts to doctors, nurses, and hospitals. Third, we asked for a credible plan—a credible plan, Speaker—to balance the budget, including immediate action to pay down the debt.

Our finance minister, showing how absolutely out of touch he is with Ontarians, called these requests a fiscal fantasy world. In fact, again this morning, in response to my questions, he called it the same thing. So, according to the Liberal government, being able to pay your hydro bill each month is a fantasy. Having enough staff and resources in your hospitals to provide adequate care, according to the minister, well, that's a fantasy. I call those standards of living that families expect their government to deliver in 2016 and onwards.

1410

By moving the budget date up two months this year, the minister demonstrated the new heights of arrogance this government has ascended to. We know from experience it takes weeks to develop the budget, if not months to prepare it. That includes writing it, translating it and printing it.

Because the budget was delivered last week, that means that while your MPPs toured the province—at some expense, I might add—holding these pre-budget consultations in Windsor, Hamilton, Thunder Bay, Sault Ste. Marie and Ottawa and then two days here in Toronto—while those consultations were being held to hear from the people—146 deputations and 100-plus written deputations also—the minister was busy ignoring the people of Ontario because the budget was, indeed, already written.

Last week and the week before, we heard that this year's shiny bauble of distraction was going to be selling wine in grocery stores. The announcement, which was supposed to take place late last year, was delayed and bumped back to coincide with this budget. Why? Last year we saw that the distraction was beer. Everybody wanted to talk about beer, and that was to distract from the despised Hydro One sale. The government again, this year, wanted to distract from the fact that taxes are going

up on alcohol, gasoline and home heating fuel, and that tax credits that help children, students, families and seniors are all being eliminated. I'll talk about those in a moment because I want to talk to you about things that weren't mentioned in the budget speech.

In fact, seniors, as I'll talk about in a little bit, will now have to pay almost double for their prescription drugs. The vast majority of seniors in the province of Ontario will find their bills doubled.

On a personal note, as a northerner, I can tell you how disappointing it was that in the minister's speech about the budget, not one time did he ever even utter the word "northern," let alone "northern Ontario." Never did he mention northern Ontario, and that tells us where we stand in the pecking order.

As you go into the document, there was one mention of the Ring of Fire. Instead of somehow that being a calming thing, it was a reannouncement of a reannouncement of an announcement. If you go all the way back to the 2014 budget, you'll read a paragraph on the Ring of Fire. The sad news is that you can jump to the 2015 budget and read virtually the same paragraph. And really, really sadly, you can jump to 2016, to the budget that was presented last week, and see virtually the same paragraph on the Ring of Fire. What that tells us is that the \$60 billion worth of potential ore that's in the ground in the Ring of Fire means nothing to this government. Instead of being the solution to their problem, they ignore it, giving it no mention in the speech and one little repeated paragraph in the budget. That tells us that, considering that the wording hasn't changed for three years, the answer is that nothing has changed for three years—nothing at all.

I've been there five times—each of the last five years. Patrick Brown, our leader, attended there in May. We looked at the potential that's there, with boots on the ground. I can tell you how disappointing it is to know that, in fact, they're worse off today than they were the first time I was there five years ago. Back then, there were hundreds of people working, exploring, because of the potential. Now there are half a dozen people because this government has ignored the north and has absolutely bungled the Ring of Fire file.

The Wynne Liberals can deny, delay, delete and distract all they want. The simple fact is this: Until Ontario's poor financial state is addressed, this government will continue to cut funding to doctors, close needed schools, and raise hydro rates to make up for their scandals, their mismanagement and their waste.

Speaker, this morning we heard from our leader, Patrick Brown, when he started to bring some specifics out—as I will do, as I say, over the next hour. The minister promised to balance the budget by 2017-18, but if you look carefully in the budget projections, their revenue is a full \$4 billion higher than our own Financial Accountability Officer says they could ever be in his best-case scenario. They're making these numbers up, but they're not credible.

Our leader also talked about the fact of how they got to some of their numbers this morning, and about the fact

that they used \$850 million from the contingency fund to help prop up this budget. That's the rainy-day fund for the concern that a recession may indeed come back. That's what it's there for, to help us weather the storms, not their mismanagement and their scandals and their waste. That's not what the intent of that \$850 million was for.

They also played some other magic with their numbers. You know, we've long said—for two years now, we have said—that this government will attempt to balance their deficit by the revenue from the sale of Hydro One. We have said that, and in the fall economic statement—first of all, the Financial Accountability Officer pretty much laid that to waste last fall, followed very quickly by the fall economic statement, which totally laid to waste any illusion that anybody has that that money is going into transit or infrastructure. It's going to balance the deficit—to make the appearance of a balance. And now, in this budget, we know that definitively.

So they've not only taken the one-time \$1.1 billion in asset sale revenue; they've also taken the one-time \$2.6-billion departure tax. They have put that in the budget as revenue. Speaker, that's never going to occur again. That is why you call it "one-time revenue." It's in there to magically prop up the deficit number, but that does not mean the deficit has disappeared. We have a structural deficit in the province of Ontario.

Actually, it was BMO, the Bank of Montreal, that came out last week with a very good document. On pages 7 and 8 of this dozen-page document, they talk exactly about this very point: that there's a structural deficit in Ontario. That means we spend more than we take in annually, and it's masked over by this vast amount of one-time sale. Speaker, I ask what happens, not next year or the year after, because we know you've got \$5.7 billion more in asset sales planned; again, we call that selling the furniture to heat the home. What happens the year after the next election, when we're out of assets to sell in the province of Ontario? That's what this is all about. It's all about trying to give the illusion that the budget is balanced to carry us through the next election, and then—I don't know. A Hail Mary pass, I presume, is pretty much all they're asking for.

So now we know that the Hydro One sale is purely to mask the deficit. And, Speaker, that tells us that the problem in Ontario, when we read this budget and see the shell game that they've played—they've done that because life is harder in Ontario under the Liberal government. Life has certainly, on Thursday afternoon, gotten more expensive in the province of Ontario under the Liberal government. Again, they use these shiny objects to distract from the fact that they're about to make everything in the province more expensive.

This is a give-and-take budget. Nothing in this budget gives without taking something else away. You'll see some examples.

1420

It's all because there's no money left in the kitty. After 13 years of reckless spending, these Liberals are attempt-

ing to balance the books on the backs of children, families and seniors. You're going to see that here as I lay that out, Speaker.

Our debt has grown by 91% in less than 10 years, to more than \$300 billion. This is the highest rate of growth of any federal or provincial government in all of Canada.

This government's fiscal mismanagement means there's less money available to invest in Ontario now and in the future. I know that the member across the aisle in her speech talked about our net debt to GDP. It's almost 40%. That's not very good, by the way. But you heard what she said, and this is where these little buzzwords get used constantly. She said that we're going to get it down to pre-recession levels.

Well, let's just talk about that for a second, because what that implies is that the recession somehow had something to do with their waste, mismanagement and scandals. They always use it. You'll find it in every document. You'll find it in every speech. They always say, "We're going to get the debt to GDP down to pre-recession levels."

When this government took office in 2003, net debt to GDP was 27%. That's where they want to get to. But it doesn't sound very nice to say, "We want to get the net debt to GDP back to where it was when we first took office"—and roared it from 27% up to 40%. That doesn't sound very good. So they think, "Who can we blame this one on? The recession."

I remember when I first got elected, Dwight Duncan was the finance minister. I was a former mayor. When you tell people everything, it's supposed to be accurate. But here he is telling us, "I'm a brand new member," and in his first speech he's telling us the tsunami is why we're out of whack and why our deficit is so high. The tsunami.

I remember turning to my seatmate, who was also brand new, and saying, "The tsunami? The tsunami in Japan? Is that what I heard him tell me—that the tsunami is why our budget deficit is so high this year?" Yes, that's what we heard. Somehow that tsunami was the excuse back then.

You don't want to say, "We're going to get back to the net debt to GDP that we first had when we took office and kind of bungled it from there." It just sounds so much better to say "the pre-recession net debt to GDP." So you'll hear that. Watch for these little words. It's amazing the little tiny turn of phrase.

I remember when we were first investigating the gas plant scandal and we had this little turn of phrase as well. We asked a question: "How much does it cost the people of Ontario to close these gas plants?" They said it cost the ratepayer \$40 million. But I never tweaked back then. In fact, none of us really did. We thought they meant everybody.

Well, they had a fine line between ratepayer and taxpayer. So if you didn't ask the very specific question—but who would ever know to do that, that there is a difference? It's these little buzzwords they use—"It will cost the ratepayer \$40 million." We were focused on the

\$40 million and never realized what they said: "ratepayer." So you ask, "What does it cost the taxpayers of Ontario?" They always answered, "It cost the ratepayers \$40 million; \$40 million is the number." That's how you get caught in the little traps of their buzzwords.

We really have to keep an eye on that, Speaker, because there are plenty of these little buzzwords in this budget. That is indeed why we have a \$308-billion debt coming this year.

Let's throw our buzzwords out. This is the ninth budget in a row that the Liberals have tabled a multi-billion-dollar deficit. There's a stat for you. I didn't hear that in the budget.

Also, this is the first time in the history of any province that the debt is \$308 billion. This year alone we will be paying almost \$12 billion in interest on that debt. That's astounding, that that is the money that is going out the door. If interest were a government ministry, it would be the third-largest ministry—health, education, interest. Can you imagine that? It's shocking to know that that's where we are because of waste, mismanagement and scandal.

The government is mortgaging our province's future on the backs of our children and grandchildren. Our provincial debt works out to \$22,103 for every single person and child living in Ontario, and the Liberals do not have any real solution to balance our budget that does not involve a tax hike, a service cut or selling more assets. For instance, what you didn't hear in the speech is that Ontario's families will see \$1.9 billion more in personal income tax next year. They forgot to mention that massive tax hike that's coming.

Again, I did speak already about the fact that they've dipped into our rainy day fund—\$850 million came out of that. Should our province experience another downturn, we will be ill-equipped to support families with services in their time of need. Again, this government is making short-term decisions that will have serious implications on our future well-being. It's clear that life is harder under the Liberals.

But let's talk about some of the items that are in the printed budget that you did not hear in the speech. This is called Jobs for Today and Tomorrow, but let's see what they've done to some of the job creators. They reduced the rate of the Ontario Research and Development Tax Credit from 4.5% to 3.5% quietly. Don't tell anybody, but our job creators—it just got more expensive. The Ontario Innovation Tax Credit: They reduced the rate of that credit from 10% to 8%. That's what we're doing to our job creators.

If you want to talk about tax credits that were so critical in Ontario—I remember when they rolled out these tax credits. The children's activity tax credit: The name says it all. It's for children's activity. Your kids' sporting events—gone. They quietly took the children's tax credit and threw it out the window.

The Healthy Homes Renovation Tax Credit: I was sitting here when they rolled that one out. They had the video with the seniors and how great this was going to be

and what a wonderful thing this was. Again, it's all about photo ops. It's all about aspiration and never about the actual operation. So that Healthy Homes Renovation Tax Credit that was so important to Ontario only a couple of years ago when they rolled it out with photo ops and fanfare—gone; it's cancelled, it's over. The children's tax credit, gone; the seniors' tax credit, gone.

Education tax credits: Here we go. The tax credits are gone. You did not hear that part of the news. You heard one aspect of education, but you didn't hear the other side of it. If you're a family living here in the GTA or in northern Ontario—anywhere in Ontario—and you have two income earners who each bring home, before taxes, \$42,000, you are no longer entitled to the tax credits because \$83,000 is the cut-off. So a two-income family, \$42,000 each—gone; the tax credit gone. The children's tax credit, the senior tax credit, the education tax credit—gone.

Speaker, you've heard me say many times in this speech that life got more expensive for the people of Ontario, but all of these decisions have consequences. They all have a cause and effect. All these aspirational speeches with no operational mechanism put in place cost us money. So while we heard about the elimination of the \$30 Drive Clean fee—that grabbed the headlines—what we didn't hear is that fees for driver and vehicle licensing are going up; fees for camping in provincial parks are going up; fishing and hunting licences are going up; liquor licences are going up; event permits are going up; court applications are going up.

1430

All of these are now going up, and the sad news is now they're going to be adjusted every year. This isn't a one-time up. It's now built in, baked in, to this desperate budget where—I called it in the national media this week—they're looking for nickels and dimes in the couch. That's what it's down to. They're taking the cushions out and jingling, looking, praying for nickels and dimes.

When you're changing the price of a hunting and fishing licence, that affects businesses. That affects the livelihood of people in my area in northern Ontario, and in Norm's area as well, in Parry Sound, and in others. So what does that mean?

Now, it's interesting that when you're down to that, you're really into the change, and that means there's less disposable income for people, which means less consumer spending, which means fewer jobs. Now, you may think that's a stretch, Speaker, that charging all these extra fees is somehow going to have lower jobs. Well, Speaker, I tell you that their own budget verifies what I've just said. Again, when you start hiking fees for camping, hiking and hunting, it affects the camps, and it affects the businesses, who are going to hire fewer people.

If you look back at the 2015 budget, the government was forecasting 78,000 new jobs. But in the fall economic statement, they readjusted it down to 46,000, a loss of 32,000 forecasted jobs. Speaker, their own budget ac-

knowledges that they're not going to make their job numbers.

When you start dickering with these fees and making life more expensive for everybody, you have less opportunity to create jobs. When you have the highest energy rates in North America, you lose out on jobs. When you have the highest payroll taxes in Canada, you lose out on jobs.

So in this budget, where it was originally forecast to have 93,000 jobs created, the new updated number in the budget is 78,000. We're down 15,000 jobs from their forecast. The year after, where they were originally forecasting 99,000, right now we're down to 93,000, a difference of another 6,000 jobs. They're forecasting, because of their own policies that they are putting in place, that we're going to lose tens of thousands of jobs in Ontario—not unlike the Ontario registered pension plan, where their own internal documents, as I've said in this Legislature at least 100 times, that we obtained through the gas plant scandal hearings—they never expected anybody other than insiders in the government to ever see that document. It was confidential advice to the Premier, which we obtained and disclosed properly. They will lose 54,000 jobs. They knew it when they put that in, and said, "Ah, it's only 54,000 jobs. Let's go ahead with it."

Last year they predicted a 1.3% upward change in employment. This year in the book, they're now predicting a 1.1% change. Again, we're down a difference of 0.2%.

So that means something. All these things that they're doing affect families. They affect businesses. They affect kids, seniors, students.

Nothing will have more of an effect, however, than the proposed cap-and-trade. Look, climate change is a serious challenge. It requires a credible plan. I don't think there's anybody in this room that's going to disagree with that. However, let's hope that this government is not riding on the goodwill of the people who want something legitimately done. Let's hope they're not riding on that goodwill and using those funds for other things. You'd hope that, Speaker, but sadly, of course, we now see in the budget what this really means.

First of all, every person in Ontario is going to feel the impact of the Liberal government's cap-and-trade tax each and every single day. The price of home heating is going up, and that means whether you heat with natural gas or propane, for instance—northern Ontario, hello, going up. The price of gasoline will go up. The price of food will continue to rise as goods and products are shipped throughout the province.

The Liberals' cap-and-trade plan provides no details on how or how much their plan will reduce emissions or protect the environment. We continue to see more photo-op environmentalism from this government. That's what this is really all about, sadly—very sadly. This is the same government that created a health tax to support health care, but put that money in general revenue and began firing nurses and closing hospital beds. They are the government who implemented the smart meters, which were supposed to lower energy costs but never saved any family a cent. But instead of costing \$1 billion

to implement—of course, we talked about waste, mismanagement and scandal—it cost \$2 billion to implement.

It always takes either the Financial Accountability Officer, the Auditor General or the OPP to tell us what's really happening here. That, in itself, is a sad, sad state of affairs: when you hear one thing from the government, but something completely different from the Financial Accountability Officer or from the Auditor General. And it's always a scathing report. How many times do we have to use the word "scathing"? "Oh, the Auditor General issued a scathing report today." I've never heard one report from the Auditor General that wasn't scathing, because what they say and what she has told us are two different things. Yes, it's scathing, because we expected one thing: We expect that when the government says that smart meters cost \$1 billion, they cost \$1 billion. Your Auditor General has to be the one to say, "No, I'm sorry to tell you, they cost \$2 billion"? That's not what you like to hear in a democratic society.

It takes the OPP to tell us the real details. We've heard that, sadly, time and time again, whether it's in the Sudbury bribery scandal or in the gas plant scandal. We get the real story from the OPP. Isn't that tragic, in the province of Ontario, that that's where we have to get our factual information that you can actually take to the bank? That's shocking.

How can this government be trusted to do what it says it's going to do? It's clear that the Premier and the Liberals are trying to exploit the public's goodwill when it comes to the environment and to climate change. Ontarians expect their government will tackle climate change, while keeping home heating and gasoline affordable for families.

The Liberal government should provide assurance that the revenue from their cap-and-trade plan will be re-invested in families and businesses, and not go towards paying for their scandal, their mismanagement and their waste.

So, Speaker, we're going to see, over the next year, exactly how the money from cap-and-trade will indeed, sadly, be put in general revenue and be used to give the illusion of balancing the budget. We've already seen that in the fall economic statement. They already booked revenue at that time—\$1.3 billion in revenue is booked into general revenue. We saw that. Now that we know the cap-and-trade is up to \$1.9 billion, we say to the people of Ontario that we will be poring through, combing through these files—every day, every week, every month, all year long—to let them know exactly what's happening with that money. And to unmask: When this government says, "We're going to be putting into this initiative," we will prove to the people that that initiative was already in the budget under another name, and that money will be removed. So, yes, they will ostensibly be putting it into that initiative, but taking that money from that initiative and using it for the deficit.

That's their plan. You heard it here first, Speaker, just like you heard it here first, two years ago, when we said that that's what they will be doing with the Hydro One

sale money. They deny, deny, delete, delay, distract, and they did it, just like we said they would. It's all because of waste, mismanagement and scandal that we're in this situation.

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No situation is worse than our hydro for our families. I've stood in this Legislature—almost all of us here. We've all stood and given individual stories about people who are struggling. I remember—sadly, 12 months ago, from the pre-budget consultations—standing in this very spot talking about this very budget, and telling the story of Jennifer from Ottawa. Her name is in Hansard. She presented in a public presentation to us. She told us that, when she gets up in the morning, the first thing she does is turn her heat off until noon. She turns it on again until 3 o'clock. She gets three hours of heat and then shuts it off again until that evening, when the rates go down, because she has to choose between whether to heat or eat. That's the story Jennifer told us. That's a real person, with a real story and real troubles in Ontario. A year has passed and this government has done nothing for the Jennifers of the world. Nothing, Speaker.

Miss Monique Taylor: Made it worse.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: In fact, you're absolutely correct: They made it worse. January was one of the worst months we saw, with the double whammy. So under this Premier and this Liberal government, Ontario's hydro rates were made unaffordable for families and seniors, and they've made it uncompetitive for business.

I think I told you the story, a time or two, about a member from the Chatham area. We toured a greenhouse. It was the first time I was ever in a greenhouse. It was exciting to see, and to see all the people that were working there and the jobs that were created, and it was kind of wonderful to see. It was exciting. The owner was telling us of his plans to double the size of his greenhouse and hire 100 more people. I was just buoyed by that thought.

A couple of years went by and there was a reception downstairs in Queen's Park, just this past fall, and I saw him again. I hadn't seen him for a couple of years, and I said to him, "Peter, did you ever build that greenhouse?" He said, "Yes, Vic. I spent \$100 million and built that greenhouse, and I put 100 people to work." I was beaming for him. I was so happy, so proud of him. He said, "The sad news, Vic, is I built it in Ohio. I cannot afford the energy rates in Ontario." So he took his \$100-million investment across the border into Ohio and hired 100 people there and built the greenhouse there. Then he told me that his good friend and competitor, who has a similar greenhouse to his in Chatham, went to Pennsylvania and built his \$100-million greenhouse down there.

Mr. Shafiq Qaadri: So they're paying for their health care too, right?

Mr. Victor Fedeli: I know you don't like to hear the facts, but we lost 2,700—2,700 fewer businesses; 2,700 businesses did what he did and crossed the border, because our hydro rate is the most expensive hydro in North America and our—

Interjections.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: They're deniers.

The government has no credible plan to address Ontario's unaffordable hydro rates. Let me repeat myself: We have the highest energy rates in North America, and energy rates are scheduled to rise—rise, Speaker. What did this government do in the budget? They gave us a break on energy; you are going to get \$2 a month back under cap-and-trade. So they're using \$2 a month. That is insulting to the Jennifers of the world and to all the families in Ontario who have to choose between whether to heat or eat. So they're all wrong, according to this government. They are all wrong, and, according to the finance minister, it's a fiscal fantasy to want affordable hydro in the province of Ontario. All of this, by the way, is because of the government's waste, mismanagement and scandal—that life got more expensive in the province of Ontario for our families and for businesses.

Do you know, Speaker, that since this government was elected, hydro costs have increased by more than \$1,000 per year in the average family, and an additional 42% increase is expected between 2013 and 2018? That's the reality. I don't hear anybody denying that today. That's interesting. That's very interesting that not one of them has any kind of a response to that, because those are factual, right?

Every time this government makes a decision—
Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): The fact that the government members aren't heckling is really no indication of whether or not they agree, because I would hope that they will not heckle you because you have the floor and I need to hear you. The member for Nipissing has the floor. I would ask the members to listen to his comments and give him the respect that he deserves as a member of the Legislature.

The member for Nipissing.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Thank you very much. Again, Speaker, let's look at the reasons why: waste, mismanagement and scandal. Those are the three reasons why our hydro rates are the highest in North America. What's worse, though, is that the government is moving full steam ahead with the sale of Hydro One, with no assurance that the fire sale of Hydro One will not result in even more rate increases for ratepayers.

The public does not support the fire sale and the experts say this is not a good deal for the province of Ontario, yet the government here—the Liberal government under Kathleen Wynne—is not acting in the best interest of the people of Ontario. They are looking for any way to raise revenues to mask the deficit that they and they alone have created here in the province of Ontario.

Let's talk about the increase in hospital spending that we heard about this weekend. Again, there's nothing in this budget, Speaker, that doesn't give on one hand and take away on the other. That's always the way it is with this government. They're not looking out for the people of Ontario; they're only looking out for their political survival. Obviously we are pleased to see that the gov-

ernment, after four years of frozen hospital budgets, has finally made an investment, albeit small, in Ontario hospitals. Again, the details are never discussed by this government. They like to give you the good news, the aspiration, without the bad news—the actual operation of these things.

While they claim that hospital funding will increase by \$345 million, what they forgot to tell you, Speaker, in the Legislature in that speech was, "Oh, yes, by the way, the gaming revenue that OLG has given to hospitals annually—\$107 million, by the way—that's being clawed back; you don't get that any further." That means that the hospital funding increase is really only \$238 million. If you remove from that the parking fees, now we're down to a number that is \$100 million plus, not the \$300 million plus that the government announced.

Again, as I said earlier, it's those little buzzwords. You've got to watch for those when it comes to anything this government says. It's those little buzzwords where they don't tell you the whole story. It's always about deny, delete, delay. That's what this government is all about. We continue to see this government claiming to do one thing but they end up doing another. The reality is, the government's ongoing cuts continue to hurt patients.

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I'm going to take a moment here, Speaker, because I want to talk about North Bay, my hometown, and what this has done to our city, and what it has done to the economy of the city.

We've had 350 cuts to our hospital in North Bay, including 100 nurses who have been fired. That's the reality. That's what has happened in the last three years. Last year we had 158 people in our front-line health care lose their jobs, including nurses.

We can talk about what that has done in the hospital, but I just first want to talk about what that has done in the economy. If you look back at November-December last year in North Bay, the university was on strike; Ontario Northland, the government-owned—I almost said "transportation and communications agency," but they got rid of the communications side of it—the government-owned transportation business was locked out; and the hospital had massive firings. As a result of that—

Mr. Chris Ballard: Massive?

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Maybe you don't think 158 is massive, but I do, and the people in the city of North Bay think 158 is massive. We had massive firings in the city of North Bay. That has meant that car dealerships suffered, because there was so much uncertainty—

Interjections.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Am I sitting, Speaker?

There was so much uncertainty in the local economy, because of these government insertions in our economy, that houses weren't selling, car dealers were struggling, retail stores were closing. Nobody wanted to go out and buy a new house. They just didn't know what the future had in store for them. Nobody could afford to buy a car, not knowing if they were going to get their job back or if they were next on the list to be fired. It really adversely affected our economy.

So when we see this frozen budget and the increase that hardly accounts for the average rate of growth of hospitals—which is between 4% and 6%—this is basically another cut that the people in my town aren't ready to hear.

I told this story once before: I was visiting my friends Joe and Jan in the hospital—one of them was a patient—and we were talking about the closed beds: 60 closed beds at a brand new hospital. This is the multi-hundred-million-dollar hospital in the city of North Bay. It was opened when I was mayor of the city. Thank you for the \$20 million that the municipality had to put in.

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: Thanks to Monique Smith.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: She's the one—oh, that's right, she closed three hospitals. That's right. I recall that now. Speaker, the—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Order.

Member for Nipissing.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Some nerves are being struck on the other side. I know that the truth hurts, Speaker. I can tell.

When this Liberal government closed 60 beds in the city of North Bay last year, closed 60 beds—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I'll start warning you individually, if it comes to that. Thank you.

The member for Nipissing has the floor.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Thank you. I'll repeat that, because obviously it strikes a wonderful chord here: They closed 60 beds.

I was in the hospital, and the person who was in the room said to me, "Vic, slide the curtain back and have a peek in there and see what that is. See what a closed bed looks like."

I didn't know what a closed bed meant when they close these beds. Sure enough, the room is empty. The bed is gone; it's folded up and in storage down in the basement, basically. The goodies on the wall are all gone, the phone is gone, the desks—everything is out of there, Speaker. That's the reality.

When you have these 60 closed beds, and you have 350 people who have been fired by the Liberal government and their mismanagement, their waste and their scandal, that tells you that there's uncertainty in the economy. There's uncertainty that is created.

They can talk about jobs for today and tomorrow. They can talk about it all they want, because it's aspirational. The operation—the reality—is, they're firing people every day. Every single day, somebody else under this government is fired.

This is a government who claims one thing and does the other. We've seen that, and we've seen the hurt that that has put on the patients. Not only are there no plans for more long-term-care beds or restoring funding for physician services and physiotherapy services for seniors, but this budget makes medication more unaffordable for Ontario's seniors, and I'm going to talk about that in a second.

These are the very seniors who are already struggling to pay their outrageous and ever-increasing hydro bills. Seniors have already seen their physiotherapy services cut, cataract services cut, diabetes testing strips cut, and hydro rates that, as I've said earlier, make them choose whether to heat or eat. Now this government is making the cost of medication more unaffordable. For seniors, life is harder under the Liberals. If you are making \$19,500 and you are a senior, the cost of your drugs will be almost doubled in the province of Ontario. Speaker, \$19,500 is the threshold. Beyond that, you are now being punished by this government for their waste, their mismanagement and their scandals, because they're making life harder for seniors.

Of course, the government, the Liberals, have eliminated the Healthy Homes Renovation Tax Credit, which helped seniors live independently and safely in their homes.

Who in this government is looking out for Ontario's seniors? They are our most vulnerable, and they deserve better. They certainly deserve better than this government.

I want to talk briefly about the farmers all across Ontario. I happened to have a luncheon on Saturday with the East Nipissing-Parry Sound farmers' symposium. All the talk there was about the fact that the OMAFRA budget, the Ministry of Agriculture budget, was reduced from \$943 million to \$916 million. They know also that the government is eliminating the Local Food Fund.

Again, Speaker, these are announcements that the government made with great pronouncements and great photo opportunities and great fanfare. Then, quietly, they cancelled them all in the actual printed budget. They're cancelling the Local Food Fund.

In contrast to six other ministries, the Ministry of Agriculture—I call it OMAFRA—is not receiving any Green Investment Fund initiatives as well, we heard.

The cap-and-trade gasoline tax of 4.3 cents a litre: This is particularly painful to the agricultural community in any part of Ontario. Again, I was home in the north on the weekend and talked to these farmers. We all had lunch together. By the way, it was our traditional sea pie that was for lunch, cooked by the farm community in Trout Creek. There was nothing to cheer about at that luncheon. When they started talking about Kathleen Wynne and the Liberal government budget, there was nothing to cheer about. They were seniors, they have families, and they're farmers, and they got the triple whammy.

As I begin to wind down in my last few minutes, I want to talk again a little bit about the north. We are particularly hit this winter. The weather: They're forecasting 90 centimetres of snow this week alone. When I was home on the weekend, there was a tremendous amount of snow. I came back to Toronto yesterday, of course, and it was 10 degrees and there was not a snowflake to be seen anywhere. It's a constant reminder that life in northern Ontario is very, very different than the life lived here in the GTA, especially in the winter.

When we talk about 4.3 cents a litre in gas, we have long distances to travel from community to community. I know that there are members on all sides who have a more urban riding. You can get on the 30th floor of the Hilton and look down and see somebody's entire riding. That's just the reality of it here in the GTA. At home, it takes me hours to get from one end of my riding to the other.

So if I want to go to Echoes Restaurant in Powassan and meet with the community in the morning and talk about plans for a development that we're looking at downtown, and then I drive all the way over to Mattawa to talk about another development that we're working on, it's 20 minutes to get back to North Bay and another 45 minutes—well, I should actually say that it's about another hour to get there. These are long drives, Speaker, so when you have 4.3 cents a litre, that's quite serious to my friends in the north and my family.

When you talk about home heating fuel, I heat with natural gas. Many of my friends and family where we live out in the country heat with natural gas—until that ends, and then they heat with propane. This is particularly onerous to our families. There are many families right across Ontario who this hits, and hits hard. That's the reality of it.

So when we hear—or don't hear—the minister present a budget on Thursday and never once say the words “northern Ontario,” that is so hurtful to the people who I serve at home. When I think of the families who are struggling, when I see the child tax credit cancelled, when I see the healthy home renovation tax credit cancelled, when I see the \$107 million from the lottery corporation that used to go to the hospitals cancelled, when I see nothing other than a real slap in the face—the \$2 deduction off the hydro from cap-and-trade—that's insulting. To know families are struggling—in our office, we hear, day after day, week after week, families who come in and say, “I got the cut-off notice from hydro. I don't know what I'm going to do.” This is the reality that people are living in. Life is expensive in Ontario under the Liberal government. As of last Thursday, when we heard that budget, for those people who woke up in Ontario on Friday morning, now life has gotten even more expensive, more difficult and harder in the province of Ontario.

Speaker, this has to stop. They can give you all the excuses in the world and bark back and forth with their smart comments, but at the end of the day, it's because of the Liberal waste, mismanagement and scandals that have been exposed by the Auditor General, the Financial Accountability Officer and the OPP.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions or comments?

Ms. Jennifer K. French: I am pleased to rise and add my comments to the thoughtful remarks from the member from Nipissing. This morning, actually, I think the government referred to the opposition members as deniers and ditherers, but I would argue that that was not dithering, sir. That was quite an hour-long presentation.

In some of the comments that you made about the budget—as we're discussing the budget and there's a lot to talk about—you had pointed out that the government had presented things with one hand and took away with the other. You know, “Look over here while, really, this is what we're doing.” I appreciated that you also recognized the stretch goals within this budget and from the government.

An interesting point that we on the opposition benches seem to recognize is that this budget seemingly was already written. The voices across Ontario were perhaps listened to, but not heard, and certainly not heeded. I've never really been involved in printing a budget, but I imagine that, by the time it gets signed off, translated and actually printed, that was all being done while they were still potentially in consultations. I think that's disappointing for Ontarians to recognize that really the process appears to have been a farce. That's disappointing.

Something else actually interesting are the numbers that they make up for themselves—the job projections. They're falling short by 60,000. Interestingly, the GM Centre—you could fill that up 10 times with the number of jobs that they're falling short in their own projections, their own numbers.

Anyway, I appreciated the member's comments. Some of the great buzzwords that I would have liked to have seen in the budget: “farmers,” “northern Ontario”—those would have been some great buzzwords.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Peter Z. Milczyn: I'm pleased to rise and offer some comments on the member from Nipissing's address to the Legislature. It's fair that different sides in this House have different views on how to manage this province.

I cannot let some of these comments go. To suggest that there was no impact on this province's finances from the recession is not true. From 2007-08 to 2009-10, the Ontario government's tax revenues fell by approximately 7%, so over \$7 billion. At the same time, unemployment went up and the outlook for our economy went down. That had a real impact on our economy. That created a series of deficits because then it took time for the strategies that we have put into place to help build the economy back up and consistently bring jobs back to this province.

To speak about aspiration: I remember that the party opposite aspired to be good managers. They downloaded billions of dollars of expenses on municipalities. Our government consistently, and in this budget, is reinstating some of that funding to municipalities to help them maintain their roads, their bridges and their water treatment plants. They aspired to fire 100,000 people in the last election. Our government is delivering a \$134-billion infrastructure plan that adds 100,000 jobs each year in construction to build up the infrastructure deficit that that party left aside. The record is clear.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Norm Miller: Let me, first of all, congratulate the member from Nipissing on doing a great job in his hour-long leadoff of raising the veil on the waste, mismanagement and scandal that's coming from this Liberal government and pointing out how life will be harder and more expensive post this budget. He demonstrated how gasoline, diesel fuel, natural gas, wine, cigarettes, kids' activities and seniors' renovations to their home are going to cost more after this budget, and how seniors' medications will cost more after this budget.

He particularly focused on the north. I just happen to have a copy of Northern Ontario Business sitting on my desk, and it talks about the Ministry of Northern Development and Mines based on the Auditor General's report. "Ministry not Making the Grade" is the headline. The member from Nipissing properly mentioned how the north wasn't even mentioned in the budget. The only page in the budget was reprinted from two other years on the Ring of Fire. This government has just been a huge failure in making anything happen in the Ring of Fire.

Previous government numbers: We're talking about how well the government is doing with its debt levels. This budget points out that we're going to be at \$308 billion. All I would say is, the government members should take on a PR job with the Toronto Maple Leafs, because they'd make a last-place-finishing team seem like they're doing okay.

They're bragging about the debt-to-GDP ratio. It was 27%—that's their aspirational goal; maybe it's a stretch goal. They're currently at 40%. That's how you measure whether you can afford the debt. The net debt of the province compared to the whole economy, the gross domestic product, is approaching 40%—39.6%—and they're talking about it like it's a good thing.

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This government is first in one thing: We're the most indebted subnational government in the world. That's something where they come first, and it's not something to be proud of.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

M^{me} France Gélinas: I, too, had the privilege of listening to the hour lead from the member from Nipissing. I, too, represent a riding from the north. When we were looking at the budget, we were looking to see if there's going to be something for Ontario Northland so that the people have intercity transportation between Sudbury, North Bay, Timmins and Ottawa, but there was nothing in there.

We were also looking to see if there's going to be a few pennies put together so we can have our first board of governors for the Franco university, but there was nothing in there.

There's an entire industry behind Sudbury Downs and horse racing in the north. That entire industry's last hope was that in this budget, they would realize that by not signing a deal for horse racing in Sudbury, it is the entire agricultural industry that goes down with it in that struggle, but there was nothing in the budget for them.

Instead, when you look at, really, what makes day-to-day life in northern Ontario—I'm sure there's a few people who have a fishing licence down here. In my riding, close to 95% of the people hold a fishing licence. We're all going to have to pay more for that fishing licence. The same goes for a hunting licence.

When you talk about camping, it is a way of life in Nickel Belt. Everybody goes camping. Well, we're going to have to pay more to go camping now because fees have gone up.

If you look at a driver's licence—when I'm here in Toronto, Speaker, I don't bring my car. I use public transit all the time. Where I live in Nickel Belt, there is no public transit. I could wait forever for a bus. It's not going to come. Therefore, I need to use my car, and I will pay more to drive that car like everybody else in the north, and that's wrong.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): That's four questions and comments. That concludes our time for questions and comments, and I return to the member for Nipissing for his reply.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Thank you very much, Speaker. I want to thank the members from Oshawa, Etobicoke–Lakeshore, Parry Sound–Muskoka and Nickel Belt for their comments as well.

On page 5 of the budget speech—I remember when the minister was reading his speech, I put a big yellow Post-it note and I highlighted in yellow a sentence that he said, because I couldn't believe he actually said this and got away with it. He said, "We've created a business and investment climate that is one of the most competitive in North America." I thought, where the heck were you when the president and CEO of Fiat Chrysler, Sergio Marchionne, told the Premier, "You've created the most expensive jurisdiction in North America. You are making it almost impossible to do business in Ontario," and there's nothing in this budget that brings any relief.

He talked about hydro. He talked about the Ontario pension. He talked about the upcoming cap-and-trade. He talked about these things that are not only strangling his own business from expanding, but he talked about the fact that this is going to cost jobs across Ontario, and those people are going to have less money to buy his cars.

Nothing was more plain than that fireside chat that he had with the Premier, and it laid it out that the direction you're going is wrong, it needs to stop and then it needs to be reversed. So to hear him and then to read this, Speaker, again I say to you, it's always the Auditor General, the Financial Accountability Officer and the OPP who have to tell us what's happening in Ontario because of waste, mismanagement and scandal.

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

Ms. Catherine Fife: It's a pleasure to follow my fellow finance critic from the PC caucus. I must tell you, this is a really interesting budget from our perspective.

I was just going to reflect back on how the budget day rolled out. We see budget papers, budget documents and

the budget as a way to address some of the core issues and core problems that we see in the province of Ontario, so we see these documents as very, very important. When I reflect back on the process that led us, as the finance committee, to travel around the province, to listen to the lived experiences of Ontarians, to take their suggestions and their feedback and to make a commitment to them—the Chair of our committee and all of us, by being present at those committee meetings, made a commitment to the people who drove very long distances, who travelled by planes, trains and sometimes automobiles. Actually, that's the only way you can get around in the north these days, is it not?

Mr. John Vanthof: Actually, no plane or train, just automobiles.

Ms. Catherine Fife: No plane or train, yes; just automobiles.

We made a commitment, by being there in those rooms and giving them their opportunity to voice their concerns. The government did issue an online survey, and I think it was very popular this year. A lot of people weighed in. The government didn't necessarily like what they heard through that feedback. But this process is important to our democracy, because it indicates that we're not just here doing our own bidding, that what happens in this place matters to the people outside Queen's Park, the rest of Ontario.

We are elected to take our seats in this House and bring the voices of the people from our communities and our respective ridings into this Legislature in a respectful manner which is also true to our democratic process. Unfortunately, this did not happen this year, because what happened is that the government moved ahead and accelerated the budget process. I believe this is one of the earliest budgets ever tabled in the history of the province. I believe that this is one of the only times that the finance minister crafted a budget without the feedback from that committee.

In fact, we're still writing that report. I was just reading the draft report, because we're still writing the report. I think it's going to be a good report. I think it would have made a big difference, actually, to how this budget looked. I would have seen the priorities of the people reflected in this budget.

However, because there was a flawed process, because we travelled around the province and the government chose not to incorporate what they heard into this document, the 2016 budget, Jobs for Today and Tomorrow—I'll get to that title, because I think it's a contradiction. Because of that, we have a flawed process, and so therefore, we have a flawed budget. I can make this case in several different ways; it's unfortunate, really, that I'll only have an hour to do so.

We just had our briefing. What happens, for those who are watching, is that the budget papers come out—they came out last Thursday. We responded. We get a chance to process this very large document, which has a lot of things in it, and then we had our briefing today with finance staff and ministry staff. They're all very good

people. They're all competent people. They always answer our questions to the best of their ability. But imagine my surprise, Mr. Speaker, when I opened the budget bill and found that it contains almost nothing that the minister spoke about last Thursday, which indicates another serious disconnect.

We didn't see in the budget bill today anything on the so-called clawback of the social assistance, for instance. There's nothing significant in the budget bill about the health sector funding, and nothing in the budget bill about a credible job strategy. This is significant when, quite honestly, we have higher youth unemployment in the province of Ontario than any other province across the country. We were looking for a credible jobs strategy in this document, and then reflected in the budget bill, which would be the legislation. Once again, education, the public education sector, has been shortchanged, but there's nothing significant in the budget bill. These issues, apparently, were not enough of a priority to include in the budget bill.

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So, actually, our finance briefing was not very long because the measures that were contained and the schedules that were contained within the bill, for the most part, are fairly straightforward. They were not complicated. They were not addressing the complex issues that we see here in the province of Ontario around the lack of confidence in our economy and our jobs strategy, around the issues that our students and our parents and our education systems are facing each and every day. Not even around climate change, Mr. Speaker: That information, if the government is serious about it, should be contained within the budget bill.

There's also this outstanding question: Why did this budget have to come at this time, so early? There is lots of sort of high-level rationale around this. The Premier has said, "The economies are shaky, and we wanted to get this budget bill out." Well, this document doesn't improve confidence in the economy of the province of Ontario, especially if you follow where the policies go; they're not reflected in the actual budget bill. So that can't really be true.

There was something about rushing this document through to address the cap-and-trade program, and yet there's nothing significant in the budget bill about the cap-and-trade program. So there's a serious disconnect here. In fact, on the same day, last Thursday, when the budget was introduced, just before the budget was tabled, the government also tabled a separate piece of legislation, Bill 172, that addresses the early stages of the cap-and-trade program. So they were free to introduce that piece of legislation. They didn't have to bypass and undermine the finance committee and the budget consultations. They introduced the piece of legislation just last Thursday morning. So why was this budget needed so early?

It's very problematic to me, and it's very problematic to the people of this province when they see the government undermine that public consultation process, shut out the voices of Ontarians and shut out their priorities

around the budget process, for no apparent reason at all. It's just politics—that's really the only excuse. Even that doesn't make a lot of sense. We have a budget that is built on the priorities of the finance minister, the Premier, and perhaps Mr. Clark, who has been informing some of the changes in policies around privatization in this province. But those are not the priorities of the people of this province.

As I reflect back and I look at, for instance, some of the other areas that are not addressed in the budget bill—the increase of the \$345 million in hospital funding. There's nothing in the bill about that issue. The Minister of Finance and the Minister of Health were at a congratulatory conference just this morning making that announcement. The overall funding for the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care is now set at \$51.8 billion. What we heard around the province around health care was that four years of funding cuts to hospitals greatly undermined the confidence of people in the health care system, especially around hospitals. The Minister of Health is keen to say that hospitals are for acute care, so only go to a hospital if you are seriously sick. But if you're in a community where you don't have a doctor, if you're in a community where you don't have a hospice or palliative care or a chronic pain clinic or even the ability to get blood tests and lab testing done, you end up in the hospital.

So the announcement this morning, this \$345 million, will not keep pace with an aging demographic; it will not keep pace with the rate of inflation, especially the way that this province is moving forward; and it will not keep pace with population growth. Base operating funding for hospitals, which has been frozen for four straight years, will increase by 1%. Mr. Speaker, 1% is not going to cut it.

The director for the regional hospital in Windsor came to the committee and gave an excellent report. It actually stuck with me because he connected the cost of operating a hospital with the impact of electricity costs on the health care system. The hydro rates for that one particular hospital went up, in one year, over \$700,000. That has an impact on the operations of that hospital. Now, the hydro bill for Windsor Regional Hospital is \$4.2 million a year, because Ontario has the highest electricity rates in Canada. He also said quite simply that he can't cut anymore; he can't. But this 1% is not going to put him in a position, as a CEO of a hospital, to try to undo some of the damage of the last four years.

Hospital funding, base operating funding, as I said, has been frozen for four straight years. That means while the hospital funding freeze is over—and actually, it was really interesting because for the last two years, the Minister of Health has denied that those budgets were frozen. Even when we would point to the page in the budget, he would say, “We're not cutting.” Even when nurses were right here in the gallery, he said, “We are not firing nurses.” I think they differed a couple of times. They had lost their jobs; they were no longer employed; they had been let go. Some people call that getting fired in the health care sector.

The overall increase to hospital funding is going to be \$345 million, composed of the base increase—less than \$200 million—and other undefined pots of money.

So on the health care front, there's a transformation at play right now. I will say, though, that the committee members heard very strong delegations around hospices. It was a relief, actually, for us to see \$75 million over three years, I believe it is, for hospice care.

I think it was a real surprise for people on the committee to find out that in the current funding model for what exists in the province of Ontario, which is a very limited hospice model for palliative care, those funds that currently flow are only for nursing and front-line care. They're not for the operating costs. They're not for the hydro or the heat or even the food. So the entire model of hospice care needs to be revisited.

The \$75 million: I would say, you know what? We absolutely welcome it. That said, there is a lot of work to do on this file. I know the member from Ottawa South is very committed to this issue. We look forward to seeing a true transformation in palliative care and hospice care because, as we heard in the finance committee, the cost to deal with someone who is dying with compassion and humanity is economically more beneficial to the province than it is for them to pass away in a hospital bed where, quite honestly, nobody wants to be. You should only go to hospitals when you are seriously sick and need specific care. But you can't do that when you don't have the other options in your community.

This document is called “Jobs for Today and Tomorrow.” It's an odd title for a budget that doesn't present any credible job creation strategies, I have to say. It's a nice title, it's a pretty cover, but it doesn't address the core issues.

When I think of where we are in the province of Ontario on the jobs crisis—every day, we try to stand up and draw attention to the fact that the new reality in the province of Ontario is precarious work. I'll quote from a Toronto Star article from last year by Laurie Monsebraaten. This was a report that came out from United Way and McMaster University. They had accumulated and done some research. Their findings were “that fewer than half of workers in the GTA and Hamilton are in permanent, full-time jobs.

“Instead, about 52% ... are in temporary, contract, or part-time positions.

“All the indicators suggest that this is the trend of the new labour market.” This came from the lead researcher, Wayne Lewchuk. “This is the new form of employment” in the province of Ontario. “It is also a major cause of social stress for people, regardless of income.

“Precarious workers are twice as likely as those in stable jobs to report having mental health problems.”

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This report was confirmed by those people who came to speak to the budget committee. The director of the Hamilton Roundtable for Poverty Reduction pretty much shocked all of us when he talked about the nature of unemployment and the impact precarious, unstable work

has on the life of a family, on the lives of children. Some 60% of those students who have parents who have precarious work, who have unstable income, who live in unstable housing, are transient students, essentially. Because they don't have a stable home, because they don't have a stable income, they move from school to school because they have to go where the housing is; they have to go where they can find emergency shelters, emergency housing. Obviously, that has a negative impact on their success rate in education. When you are moving from school to school and you are dealing with parental stress, that compromises your health, that compromises your ability to be successful, and it compromises your ability to reach your potential.

That's what this Premier said she wanted, Mr. Speaker. You remember it well—ruling from the activist centre, using evidence-based decision-making, using research and applying it to policy, and then applying it also into legislation.

I have to say that the editorial today in the Toronto Star countered that entirely. Today's editorial is called "Shortchanging Kids." The first line says, "Rarely has a Liberal government in Ontario tabled a less child-friendly budget than Jobs for Today and Tomorrow. The highlights of the province's 2016 financial plan.... There was no money for affordable child care." What a missed opportunity, building on what the Auditor General told us about the lack of safe, affordable, accessible child care in the province of Ontario. She identified, of course, the inconsistencies in those policies that directly affected the well-being of children.

Given the research and the evidence, as confirmed by the Ontario Coalition for Better Child Care's press release, when you invest in child care, the return on investment from an economic perspective is twofold, sometimes more, depending on the neighbourhood. It directly has a positive and substantive impact on the lives of women and mothers, allowing them to work, allowing them to go to school, allowing them to better their lives. When those women, when those mothers improve their lives, then the lives of their children in turn are benefitted. Yet there is not any substantive investment in child care.

This is 2016. We know better. This Premier has stood up on so many occasions and said the exact same thing that I just said, because it's true: When you invest in child care, the return on investment cannot be questioned. The evidence is there, the research is there. Instead, we have this rhetoric from this government on full-day kindergarten. Well, people in 2016 do not work the length of the school day. They do not work from 9 until 3. They need that seamless day that this government originally promised and then backtracked on.

I have to say, from a poverty reduction standpoint, if you are serious about addressing child poverty, family poverty, if you are serious about allowing people to reach their potential from an educational perspective, then child care is the go-to place. Investing in early learning and care is the greatest way that you can impact and benefit

communities as a whole. Yet in this budget, once again, a missed opportunity, and then just a pointing or tag-off onto the full-day kindergarten program.

The editorial today says, "Investing in child care has a double payback. It improves the life chances of low-income kids and frees their parents to work. Without a strong start, many disadvantaged kids don't complete high school, let alone go on to college or university." It goes on to talk about children's aid societies, which I may touch on in just a second.

I need to go back to jobs because, obviously, I see the connection and we see the connection between investing in child care and strengthening the economy. Yet this budget once again downgrades the government's own commitment or target around job creation. Instead, the government proposes the Business Growth Initiative—and it's meant to increase global competitiveness—which would commit \$400 million over five years. Yet the Liberals project that they will fail to meet last year's job creation goals by more than 60,000 jobs, from 2015 to 2018. Just in case anybody wants to question that, I just have to go back to last year's budget. They projected 78,000 jobs for that year, but then in the fall economic statement for 2015 they projected 46,000 jobs, which was a decrease of 32,000 jobs.

So we're going in the wrong direction; that's my point. The government is not even aspiring anymore to hit those targets around job creation. Businesses' investment is expected to be significantly low this year, as a result of a number of initiatives, including the sell-off of Hydro One and high electricity rates. We heard this very clearly, particularly in the north.

The mayor of Thunder Bay's report to us sticks out to me, because he made the point that, as a whole, that city, their local chamber and their local economic development corporation desperately are trying to draw people to northern Ontario, because northern Ontario has so much potential; it truly does. And yet, because the infrastructure investments have not been there or have not been followed through or have been re-announced, people have lost confidence in those infrastructure investments. I have only to cite the Ring of Fire, which he also addressed. I remember sitting up there in 2007, when Dwight Duncan was the finance minister, and that was when they first made the announcement of the Ring of Fire. Some of us cynically sometimes refer to it as the "ring of smoke," but it's too important to lose sight of the potential of the Ring of Fire. What the mayor of Thunder Bay said, very clearly, is that there are two access roads that need to happen, and they need to happen now. He called on this government in a very passionate and compelling way to follow through on the commitment that you made to northern Ontario.

The other major stumbling block, obviously, for northern Ontario is the high cost of electricity. I think the critic from the PC Party truly addressed some of those concerns. We've heard it, though, from our northern members. There's a reason that our members have generators. Sometimes they have to compare who has a bigger

generator than the other one. There's an instability to the energy sector in the north which we don't have to face here in southern Ontario. That's just a fact.

So that deputation from the mayor of Thunder Bay really stuck with me. I must also say that when he did comment on the correctional facility in Thunder Bay, he really implored the government. He acknowledged that you don't need to build new correctional facilities probably all over Ontario, but what you do need to do is that you need to knock down that rat hole. That is what he called the correctional facility in Thunder Bay; he called it a "rat hole." He said it can't be fixed. You would not expect the conditions in that facility in this great country, this great province. You might expect it in Third World conditions; that's how bad it is.

The correctional officers from across the province did an outstanding job of coming to us and making a strong case for a better justice system and for a more compassionate system, where post-traumatic stress disorder is not the issue that they face each and every day. I was pleased that they came with figures, with numbers and with a great business case to streamline those correctional facilities.

When I did tour Vanier and Maplehurst in Milton—I drive by them all the time. I did a tour with our critic from Oshawa. I have to say, when I was in the Vanier women's prison, there was great instability in the sector at the time. But to see those who are mentally ill in those small little cells for 23 hours of solitary confinement is a kind of depravity that I can never un-see, that I can never un-experience. I must tell you, once you bear witness to those conditions in those jails, you must take action. To see that the ministry of justice under corrections receives so little funding for those body scanners, for the communication tools, for the body vests, for the protective fire equipment—it just seems like it's so low on the priority list.

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That's how you can actually see where this government puts its priorities: when you follow the money. You can read the press releases, cut the ribbons, get the shovels out and dig a hole, but at the end of the day, it's where the money's going. Those are the real priorities of a government.

Sadly, for the correctional sector, these people, some of them—60% of them in Vanier have never had their day in court. The correctional officer in Thunder Bay said, "You know, people go into those facilities, potentially innocent, but they don't come out innocent." I can tell you that it is an unnatural place to be, and there is nothing restorative about those facilities. There is no compassion for someone who is mentally ill and who lives in solitary confinement for 23 hours of the day. It's inhumane. It needs to be addressed, and there needs to be a serious overhaul in the justice system in the province of Ontario.

There's no reason that our jails are filled with 60% of people who can't afford bail—and that was another issue that was raised in today's editorial. "There was no

funding"—so this particularly addressed youth in our court system. The editorial from the Toronto Star goes on to say: "There was no funding to alleviate the massive backlog in the province's courts. This leaves thousands of young Ontarians, charged but not convicted, in pre-trial custody. Judges, lawyers and prison reform advocates have urged the government to speed up the trial process. But without more courtrooms, that isn't likely to happen. The logjam takes its heaviest toll on young offenders from poor families who can't come up with the bail to get out of jail until their court date."

I can tell you that, based on just the observation of what I saw in those facilities, there's a disproportional amount of people who are clearly suffering and who don't have advocates in their lives, and without advocates in their lives, they are destined to sit there until they can get a court date, which is completely unjust. It is an unjust justice system. It needs to be said.

A 2013 study by the United Way—this is back to precarious work—found, as I said, that 52% of those workers in the GTHA are in temporary, contract or part-time positions. This government does not accept those stats. They stand up every single day and they challenge these stats. This is actually what we heard from people on the budget consultation process. Part-time work is also a characteristic of poor education, and we know that there are many individuals in the service and retail sectors who simply don't have the stability of knowing how many hours they're going to get from one week to the next. This is not only playing havoc with the stress of those individuals, but again, it's just not good for the economy.

Despite the fact that for 12 years straight—12—Ontario's youth unemployment rate has sat above the national rate, there's no new funding to combat youth unemployment in this budget, nor was there any in the budget bill. We do know a little bit about the government's track record on job creation strategies, though, which might suggest a bit of a guide to understanding the initiative proposed in this year's budget.

I just want to point out that I started my comments today on the budget bill by saying that a budget is an opportunity for the government to address some systemic issues that you see in the province, and we have several Auditor General reports that give you enough information to take some action on.

I'm thinking most recently about the one that just came out in December 2015. The Auditor General found that on the issue of funding awards that this government gives out, like the southwestern development fund or the RED fund or the eastern development fund, and this is a direct quote, "Since 2010, about 80% of total approved funding was made through non-publicly advertised processes in which only selected businesses were invited to apply."

Interjection.

Ms. Catherine Fife: Oh, the Auditor General—yes, it's amazing to me. The Auditor General is wrong; the Liberals are right—whatever.

"The ministry could not provide selection criteria or ... a list of companies invited to apply for funding."

Therefore, “the ministry also does not maintain a list of the businesses rejected for funding, or those that withdrew their applications.”

“Funding often awarded without needs assessment. The ministry almost never assesses whether businesses need public funding in order to achieve the proposed project.”

Again from the Auditor General’s report: “In one case, a manufacturer was approved for a \$1-million grant in 2013 to install a new \$14-million production line, even though there was documentation on file saying ‘it appears the project will move ahead regardless of the Southwestern Ontario Development Fund support.’”

So not only was this an invite-only process, not only was the ministry awarding funding to a company that didn’t necessarily need the funding, but then they go on to not even measure whether or not it made any difference to job creation. You couldn’t even make this stuff up; I really do think that sometimes.

In another case, it was found that funding was not provided based on need, but rather because the funding was important to the investors to provide confidence to remain in Canada.

I’ll tell you what undermines confidence, Mr. Speaker: a process where a government chooses winners and losers in the economic development of the province. That undermines confidence, which is most unfortunate because there are companies out there who could benefit through an open and transparent method of awarding funding. There are many businesses and many young entrepreneurs across this great province who want to be part of the solution for the economy. They’re not keen anymore on working for a large corporation or a large company, and they like the idea of developing their own product and being their own boss. That was the original intent, actually, of the Southwestern Ontario Development Fund.

Yet when the Auditor General goes back to the ministry and asks for documentation, asks for the transparency around the awarding of those funds—because these aren’t Liberal funds; this is the money that the people of this great province have directed here through a revenue stream. They have a right to know where that money is going.

Still on jobs and the economy, she also found that some public information was misleading. She said that over “the last 10 years and as recently as January 2015, the government publicly announced almost \$1 billion more of economic-development and employment-support funding projects by reannouncing the same available funding under different fund programs.”

That’s disappointing, you have to say. It’s a little shell game. That’s what it seems like, Mr. Speaker. When there’s a reannouncement of funding that’s already been awarded, as I said, it doesn’t instill confidence. Overall, it has overstated its funding by over \$1 billion.

In this budget—as I said, you have this Auditor General’s report, which highlights some systemic issues and clearly some lack of transparency. You have the

opportunity, through a budget document, to address this in a meaningful way. The budget bill today is silent essentially on economic development or at least increasing the transparency of those funds.

The key economic goals were ignored. Instead of focusing on increasing exports, developing innovations or increasing productivity, contracts did not formally require improvements in any of these areas.

“Other provinces set targets.” I can’t emphasize this enough. Setting targets matters. Having an open and transparent way to measure progress on investment matters. Most businesses understand this. Why should the government get to create their own rules around economic development funding?

We were pleased to accept the Auditor General’s report and act on it. That is why we’re trying to hold this government to account through this budget process.

That’s enough. It was pretty disappointing, on the whole.

What is ironic for us is that this document is called Jobs for Today and Tomorrow and yet you have a government that has missed their target on almost everything. They missed their target on job creation. They missed their target on employment growth. They’ve missed their target on the downgraded jobs from last year’s budget. They’ve decreased the ORDTC rate from 4.5% to 3.5%. They are decreasing the OITC rate from 10% to 8%. Then, as I mentioned, they’re packaging this all back up into the business growth initiative.

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And yet there’s still a lack of transparency around how the funding will flow out of this place to those businesses. I have to say, it doesn’t instill confidence. For us, based on the feedback that we received through the budget consultation process, that’s disturbing.

I think one of the issues that garnered the most attention through this budget, aside from the lack of a credible plan around jobs, was the issue of drug costs for seniors. It was an interesting exchange this morning, I think we would all agree, between our leader and the Premier, because the Premier sort of said that by default, clearly that threshold for seniors is going to cause some damage.

There’s an opportunity here to fix it, but just to recap: The drug program changes caught every senior in the province of Ontario by surprise, because there was no senior who showed up at budget consultations and said, “You know what? We’re doing okay in the province of Ontario. It’s completely affordable for us. Why don’t we pay a little bit more for drugs?” Nobody said that. I just want to clarify that and get it on the record.

Starting August 1, 2016, the government is increasing the seniors’ low-income thresholds. The government says it’s going to add 170,000 seniors who will qualify, but for single seniors, the low-income threshold will increase from \$16,000 to \$19,000. Now, I don’t consider a senior who lives on \$19,000 to be a rich senior. I really don’t, and if you are a senior and have budgeted for this upcoming year, and then you find out that your drug costs

are going to double—I think, quite honestly, Mr. Speaker, that this will hurt seniors.

Actually, we did hear from a number of seniors. CARP weighed in quite heavily on this issue, which was really good to see, because they are a respected organization. They indicated that this did catch them by surprise, as you would imagine. Quite honestly, as I said, I think they felt that generally they got side-swiped by this increase.

As I mentioned, hospital funding is of course a serious issue, and it was really interesting that the Healthy Homes Renovation Tax Credit, which was supposed to help seniors live independently in their homes and make renovations to improve safety and accessibility, will end on January 1. We said this from the very beginning: If you're a senior and you're in your home and you've got the money to renovate, then you're going to do it anyway.

For the majority of seniors that we see, the majority of seniors that the community care access centres are trying to deal with—although, as the Auditor General pointed out, again, a lot of that money, 39% of it, goes to administration, bureaucracy and profit—are not in a position to undergo a major renovation and then, in turn, apply for a Healthy Homes Renovation Tax Credit. So seniors woke up on Friday and they weren't happy. They weren't happy for very good reasons.

The other piece I have to talk about is climate change cap-and-trade, because this is why the government said, "You know what? This is why we have to have this budget. Two months—we have to accelerate the budget process. We have to bypass and undermine the public consultation process." And yet, as I already mentioned last Thursday, the government introduced the needed piece of legislation, so there was no rush needed to move cap-and-trade forward.

As it is right now, though—while this is mentioned in the budget papers, it is not in the budget bill—if you look at the comparators between the way Ontario has addressed cap-and-trade and the way California did—for instance, when they announced this in California, they ensured that the large emitters, the large polluters, were part of the cap-and-trade model at the very beginning. Ontario has given the large emitters a three-year grace period—a window, if you will. This isn't including some of the—for instance, the concrete association. They've done a very good job of reducing their greenhouse gas emissions. It's one thing to acknowledge the progress that they have made; it's another thing altogether to do a broad sweep of large corporations in the province of Ontario and give them a three-year window when the impact of cap-and-trade is, obviously, a shared responsibility, and it is going to impact Ontario families, Ontario families who came to us and said, "High cost of food. High cost of electricity. High cost of transit. High cost of housing."

Cap-and-trade for us, on climate change—we have been very clear and we've been very consistent on climate change. The way that this plan is crafted as it is

right now, we have some serious issues around fairness. Giving large emitters a three-year grace period and then asking everyday Ontarians to come right to the table and start paying the price is, for us, a flawed model.

Not having specific targets: There are no greenhouse gas reduction targets attached to these programs, nor is there any requirement that the Environmental Commissioner audit the greenhouse gas reduction results.

You can't blame us, really, for having some confidence issues. The government already rolled out an energy retrofit program just shortly after Christmas, and they connected it to Enbridge and to Union Gas. We were really surprised in Kitchener, because Enbridge and Union Gas do not deliver gas to the entire city of Kitchener. The immediate concern was that they left out the entire city of Kitchener, and also parts of Kingston. Kingston has its own delivery model as well. But the Liberals have assured us that everything is going to be fine.

People in Kitchener want to be part of the energy retrofit. They want to be part of the solution. They want to take part in the energy retrofit model.

You've told us everything is going to be okay, so we're going to make sure—

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: It's in our budget bill.

Ms. Catherine Fife: No, it's not. It's not in the budget bill. That's my whole point. In fact, the budget bill is very light. It's a light budget bill, I have to tell you. The budget document—the budget papers—which came out last Thursday talks about a lot of things.

One of the things that it does talk about which actually brought some hope—I want to talk about something positive. The budget document did reference a review of the clawback of social assistance. It did. But it's not in the budget bill. I just want to point that out. See, if it were in the budget bill, I would have some confidence that the government was serious about doing it. But the clawback is—actually, it's interesting. It's on page 131, and it says, "Ontario will ... take steps to help increase the incomes of single-parent families who receive both social assistance and child support payments. Currently, families receiving child support have their social assistance benefits reduced"—we call it a clawback; you say "reduced"—"by the full amount of child support they receive." BC moved for a full ban last year.

I just want to tell you that at the budget consultations, there was a really interesting moment where one of the advocates said that the clawback essentially results in stealing from children. This was from the Hamilton area. Another delegate said, "Three quarters of everybody who's using a food bank are really receiving their main income source from the provincial government," which is a problem, right?

People want to work. We actually heard this from one of the delegates—

Mr. Paul Miller: Huge problem in Hamilton.

Ms. Catherine Fife: Especially with those who are disabled.

She said, "I want to work. I don't want to live on assistance. Nobody wants to collect welfare. Nobody

wants to be on ODSP, especially when basically it's a sentence to live in poverty."

Mr. Paul Miller: Peanuts.

Ms. Catherine Fife: Yes.

He goes on to say that those who are using food banks "are really receiving their main income source from the provincial government. In a very real sense, the provincial government is instituting hunger through its inability to fix the social assistance system." He implored this government to take action because "enough kids" are "using food banks in" Hamilton "alone to fill 270 classrooms."

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There was a 1.5% increase in social assistance; the advocates have some strong feelings about that. I think that, quite honestly, when you put that 1.5% in the greater context of what we've heard around poverty reduction in the province of Ontario, so much of this comes back to housing, because housing connects everything. When people are spending 50%, 60%, 70% of their so-called disposable income on housing, on shelter, it leaves nothing, really, afterwards.

That's why we were definitely disappointed to see that there's a \$20-million reduction in Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing. This is the time—aside from child care—to get serious about housing in the province of Ontario. The government has said, "We can't do that alone. We need our federal partners to come to the table." I'm all for that collaboration, but in the meantime, this government has held power since 2003, and the need for supportive housing has never been greater.

I'm working with a group of parents right now in my riding, three mothers who have adult children, men who are significantly disabled and on the autism spectrum and are high, high, high needs. They've pooled their resources and they've bought their own home, on the premise that the government would work in collaboration with them and provide the pooling of the funds to provide respite and to provide services. They're actually willing to come to the table with the capital costs, but this government would not even fund that pilot project.

So there are people in this province who have creative ideas, who are committed to making this province a better place and who understand that when you don't invest in solutions today, you pay more down the line. It's the same with health care, and it certainly is the same thing for education. For a government who has said that they're not cutting education, when you look through 2014, 2015, and then this year, 2016, and you see an in-year cut for the education sector on page 256 of \$430 million, cumulatively that's just over a billion dollars.

There is no good time to cut education. You never stop investing in education. It always makes sense to ensure that children have in this province—if we're actually going to build Ontario up, then a strong publicly funded education system is a key part of that. We were surprised, and I know the stakeholders are processing that to see how that funding is going to have an impact on education going forward.

But I go back to today's editorial, because there is this promise that has been made by the Minister of Finance: "We're not going to leave anybody behind," finance minister Charles Sousa assured Ontarians as he tabled his fourth budget." It goes on to say, "Kathleen Wynne promised when she became Ontario's 25th premier in 2013 to make social justice her top priority. Treasury Board president Deb Matthews, who presented the government's latest poverty reduction strategy ... said: 'We are recommitting to reducing poverty among children and youth through targeted investments and supports.'" Then the editorial goes on to say, "There was scant evidence to back up any of that in last week's budget."

Now, there are good places to always invest scant resources, if you will. In child care, the return on investment is always there; you can't go wrong with early learning and care. You can't go wrong with education.

The issue of special-needs students in our system right now—and there are a number of reasons why we have a better understanding of that student population: one is identification; two is that we just know better right now, we have better assessments. But when we found out through an FOI that there were 16,000 children on a wait-list for autism services, IBI and ABA—and we had to file an FOI on it—it was a shock. Our job as opposition members is to call the government out on where the funding is going, what promises they have made, what platitudes they have embraced and what press releases they have issued. But those 16,000 children—that was a real shock to us. Having that information allowed us to advocate for those children, for those families, and our critic Monique Taylor did an excellent job of drawing attention to it. I want to say that we were pleased to see that there was \$333 million over five years for autism services, although we still have some questions because it references in the document that you're going to redesign the system. Any time you say "redesign" or "modernize," we have some concerns, because it never really works out that well in those instances.

The other major thing that I have to mention—the time is going very quickly—is the energy file. I have to say that what we heard across the province is that the high cost of electricity and the high cost of energy impact everything, from the environmental perspective as well. Yet Hydro One and the sell-off of Hydro One were the number one issues that delegates addressed with us. They were very clear that they are not buying what the government is selling as it relates to the sell-off of Hydro One. They're not buying the broadening, the ownership language; you don't get more broad around ownership than the entire province. They don't buy the fact that this is going to financially benefit them down the line. They see it very clearly for what it is: a quick cash grab to meet the deficit reduction target of 2017-18. Now we even have the Financial Accountability Officer's report, which confirms that the year after 2017-18, we'll see an increase in the debt. It is a short-term policy that's going to have a long-term painful effect for the entire province.

I go back to the Auditor General's reports because I just want to point out that when you have reports like this

and then you have an opportunity to address a problem, one, you have to admit you have a problem and then two, you don't really have to admit it because the Auditor General did it for you. When this does happen, then you have a budget that you can actually use as a tool, if you will, a vehicle to address a systemic issue.

The Auditor General's report from December 2015 said that in 2004—this is a long-standing issue—the electricity system was restructured to provide for independent transparency planning, but over the last decade, this power system planning process has essentially broken down. We found no evidence that ministerial directives and directions were supported by public consultations or economic analysis disclosed to the public, which would be consistent with our experience with this budget.

It's really interesting, because once people start digging down and they sort of think more about where their energy is coming from, they're really surprised to find out that Ontario currently has an oversupply of electricity that could power Nova Scotia for the next five years.

This is from the Auditor General's report. Despite this oversupply, Ontario has spent \$2.3 billion in conservation programs from 2006 to 2014, and then no cost-benefit analysis was done to show that it would be better to import electricity in order to meet the demand than to procure additional generation capacity.

The AG goes on to say that the “OEB was not consulted in the privatization of Hydro One”—of course we knew that. We knew that nobody was consulted in the privatization of Hydro One. “With private investors interested in maximizing profits, it is uncertain what the impact on electricity prices will be. The OEB, the protector of consumer interests, was not consulted in this decision-making process.”

The energy file could not be more messy. The lack of accountability, the lack of transparency, the lack of having any kind of empathy, at least with the consumers in this province, for having the highest electricity bills in Canada is just not there. The Auditor General finds that people and small businesses are paying 70% more on hydro bills because the Liberals sidestepped the OEB and ignored expert advice.

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She found so many problems with the CCACs that it would be a whole other new, hour-long lead.

She identified the CAS taking seven months to investigate possible abuse of children. Now the provincial advocate, God love him, is trying to dig down into the contracting out of group homes. These are our most vulnerable youth in the province. They are, essentially, homeless. They are wards of the state. They used to come under the care of the CAS, but now CASs contract out to for-profit companies to, basically, provide shelter. These youth are so at risk, and they have so many issues. The latest report the child advocate came out with indicates great abuse. That's what happens when profit drives the policy. When profit is the driver of the service, you see a disconnect.

Quite honestly, this government seems content to contract out almost all public services. We have never seen the level of privatization—not even under the Conservatives. The Liberals have taken the Conservative model and doubled down on it and accelerated it.

There was even a story in the paper this weekend that this government is thinking about privatizing, contracting out, the service of evictions, which is very much connected to the justice system. This model is in the United States. During the budget consultations, we faced the people who get evicted. They are primarily women; they are primarily children. They can't make their rent because their rents are so high—because there are no protections for renters—and because they can't find full-time work. They can only find precarious, part-time, contract work. Also, they are ensconced in a system of a broken social net. That's what we saw first-hand when we travelled around this province. So we truly have some issues with this budget.

The issue of the free tuition got a lot of attention. New Democrats are definitely supportive of any policy which increases access to education for low-income students across the province. In fact, we've been long-time advocates for addressing the overall costs in the PSE system. And yet, once again, the government calls something free which is not free. The government is only providing for the average tuition, which they consider to be \$6,160. However, Stats Canada has an average tuition of \$7,868. It's actually almost between \$8,000 and \$9,000. So we have some serious questions. We need greater clarification on this program. If the intent really is to increase access, then having a \$3,000 levy, if you will, to access the granting program—then you can't in all honesty call something free. You can't call something free when it is not. We're going to be peeling back the layers on this announcement and trying to address some of the weaknesses in this plan as it was rolled out. Of course, it was completely foreseeable that it was designed in this way. You can't build a policy on an average which is not accurate.

Mr. Speaker, as I conclude my comments—there was a missed opportunity in this budget to address infection prevention. Class 1 was a company from Cambridge that submitted a delegation.

If this province is serious about creating a budget that actually will create jobs for today and tomorrow, then they need to do a better job of listening to the people that they serve, that we all serve, that we all have a responsibility to listen to, and then to apply that knowledge in a real and actionable way.

It is most unfortunate that this budget misses that mark on so many levels, despite some good intentions on some policies. With that, I look forward to the questions and comments and I look forward to the debate on this budget. Budgets are too important to not listen to the people of this province.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Hon. Bill Mauro: I want to thank the member for her comments and the member previous who spoke for an hour, as well, on today's budget bill.

I will talk only briefly—I have two minutes here today—but there has been a fair amount of commentary that has been provided around electricity pricing in the province of Ontario. As is the convention in this place, the budgets allow members an opportunity to sort of stray from, perhaps, what may be the particular subject matter of the day; in this case, the budget. But I'm happy to make some comments on that, as well.

As I said, I only have about a minute and a half, but the one thing that I have said in this place in the past, on numerous occasions—and I think it bears repeating today—is that there were several commitments that were made years ago by all three political parties when it came to energy pricing in the province of Ontario. The costs that were associated with those commitments could not have been avoided by the Progressive Conservative Party and could not have been avoided by the New Democratic Party, just as they could not have been avoided by the Liberal Party.

I think it would be helpful, from time to time, if when the opposition parties—both of them—find opportunity to speak on electricity pricing in the province of Ontario, they might acknowledge at least that, in my opinion, anywhere from 60% to 80% of the increase in Ontario since we came to government would not have been avoided under any situation, no matter who was in government, unless they were going to stand down from the commitments that they had actually made going back to 2003, when I first ran. I remember them very clearly.

Speaker, I think it's fair that, on the energy pricing file, they are being disingenuous and selective in their memory—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): It crosses the line. I would ask the member to withdraw.

Hon. Bill Mauro: Speaker, I withdraw. I apologize.

But I would say that I think there is a broader discussion that needs to be had and conveyed to people who are interested in this file; and, clearly, the opposition parties are not telling the whole story.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions or comments?

Mr. Toby Barrett: I appreciate the opportunity to continue this broader discussion. This budget measures act alone has something like 34 different schedules. I want to make reference to schedule 30. But what I find passing strange as I read through the various schedules is that the title on top is Jobs for Today and Tomorrow Act (Budget Measures), but most of the schedules, as far as the membership of a university board of governors, really have nothing to do with jobs today or tomorrow.

Schedule 30 makes changes to the Tobacco Tax Act through this bill, Bill 173. The bottom line is that the price of a carton is going to go up \$3. In fact, it went up, I think it was, at 12:01 on the Friday morning after this budget measures act was tabled. I have a concern: That puts the price for a carton up to about \$90.

This government does recognize the problem with contraband. The reason for the problem with contraband is the very high taxation rate on tobacco, which means the legitimate players cannot compete with the illegal players, whether they be growers, manufacturers, processors or retailers; and nobody really in this province seems to be able to compete with organized crime.

So we've jacked up tobacco prices \$3 a carton. Within the black market, the math is really simple: Why pay \$90 when you can pay \$9? It's that simple.

To their credit, the budget papers themselves go on to deal with the underground economy, contraband tobacco, drugs and organized crime. I do give the government credit for taking that initiative.

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The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions or comments?

Mr. Paul Miller: I read the budget, and I understand that there's a small contribution the government is making to assist OW and ODSP, but with all due respect, the total amount may come to just over \$300 a year. I don't know what \$300 a year is going to do. It might pay for the groceries for two weeks. It really doesn't cut it.

I do remember, about six years ago, that Minister Matthews was in town—she was in a different portfolio at the time. She was in town and I was at that meeting. She promised all the people in Hamilton and all the poverty groups that she would reduce poverty by 25% in five years. Well, that didn't happen. It didn't even come close. So when she comes into town next time, I'm going to ask for an explanation of why she didn't meet her goals. She had five years to work on that, and we're no further ahead than we were. In fact, we're in worse shape.

I didn't hear any mention in this budget about helping the steel industry in this province—nothing. I didn't hear a word about helping out the province with the courts and US Steel and all the things that are going on—not a word. They have a pension insurance plan in this province, which other provinces don't have, but it's grossly under-funded. I don't see any money going into that fund. If a major company like US Steel or somebody went under, that plan might last a year and a half for the pensioners, for the amount of money that is in there, maybe two years. They put absolutely no money in to protect the pensioners, and that's a crucial problem in our province. I see nothing done about that.

You look at all the other issues that are going on in the province. They focused on infrastructure. I hope when they do the infrastructure projects, they're going to use Canadian steel made in Canada, instead of flooding the market with cheap, foreign steel and using it, which is on our docks in Hamilton, Toronto and Montreal. Cheap, foreign steel that's undercutting our jobs—and they're doing nothing about it.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Shafiq Qadri: How does the 2016 budget impact and benefit the people of the great riding of Etobi-

coke North? Let me count the ways. We have, as you know, major infrastructure plans. We have approximately a \$1.2-billion, eight-stop—count them, Speaker; eight stops—going through my riding of the Finch LRT. We have a \$90-million expanded student centre at Humber College, the north campus, which again is in my riding of Etobicoke North. We have a \$200-million-plus quadrupling of the footprint of Etobicoke General—a new cardiorespiratory centre, neurodiagnostic, maternal newborn, an NICU, emergency department.

Speaker, I can tell you that my residents are absolutely delighted, heartened and inspired by the commitment that our government has made to reduce—in fact, make free—college and university tuition fees for folks in families making less than \$50,000 annually.

These are all signs of a government on the move. I have to say that the extraordinary commitment to education, whether it's at the JK level, the kindergarten level and beyond—and now at the university and college level—really enhances, fortifies and changes the collective mind of Ontario.

This is an extraordinary development, and I have to salute Premier Wynne and her vision, and, of course, by extension, her caucus, who has helped to advise, configure and craft this extraordinary budget for these times.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Come to order.

The member for Kitchener–Waterloo has two minutes to reply.

Ms. Catherine Fife: Thank you very much. So there you have it: You have that one world and that one vision of what this budget is. How I started this, in my two minutes, was just pointing out that many of the words and the ideas and the announcements are not contained within the budget bill. That, for me, is cause for concern, especially around poverty reduction and job creation.

The poverty reduction piece: If this government is going to move ahead with the clawback—because currently in the province of Ontario, every penny of the average \$280 monthly child support payment to families on social assistance is clawed back by the government. Delegates told us that that is literally taking food out of the mouths of children. Yet this government moved very quickly on the sell-off of Hydro One. On this proposal—if I'm to read this, because I don't have a budget bill that gives me a timeline—they're going to wait a whole other year to think about it, to create another round table, another task force and what have you. I don't think the most vulnerable people in this province can afford to wait.

When you look at the fact that this government can figure out how to claw back \$40 or \$50 from a single mother on social assistance, and yet when they hand out Ministry of Transportation road maintenance contracts and those companies don't deliver the service and the MTO issues \$49 million in fines, the MTO can't find a way to collect that \$49 million, this is fundamentally the disconnect of this government. This government can

figure out a way to take back \$40 or \$50 from the poorest people in the province of Ontario, yet they can't figure out how to design a contract for road maintenance, make sure those companies deliver the service and, once they're fined, collect those fines. That, in essence, is the disconnect between the Liberal government of Ontario and the rest of the province.

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

Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde: I would like to start by saying that I will be sharing my time with the member from Ottawa South, the member from Etobicoke Centre and the Minister of Transportation. It is a great honour to rise today and to talk about Budget 2016: Jobs for Today and Tomorrow.

I must say, Mr. Speaker, this is a debate we're having, and I respectfully respect the opposition doing their job, but I certainly hope they will take this budget and bring it back to their ridings. I believe they'll find something for each and every constituent of theirs, because it is there. I would like to highlight some aspects of it that will have an impact not only for Ontarians, but for members of my community in Ottawa–Orléans.

I'm very proud that the Minister of Finance and our government delivered a budget that outlines a path to balance while investing in Ontarians and our communities. Our number one priority is growing the economy and creating jobs, and this is exactly what this budget will do.

We will help businesses create jobs by reducing red tape. As a former business person, I was happy to know that the Minister of Economic Development, Employment and Infrastructure will be launching the Red Tape Challenge, an online consultation tool designed to identify and eliminate duplication, lessen compliance burden, shorten response times and make it easier for businesses to interact with the government. By reducing the cost of doing business, we will help employers create more jobs, and they will continue to fuel the growth in Ontario's economy.

Our budget continues to make significant investments in our students, so they may create the jobs of tomorrow. We recognize the importance of post-secondary education as essential to the well-being of our province and our economy.

Je suis fière de voir que notre gouvernement will be improving access to post-secondary education to our youth. The new Ontario Student Grant will ensure that students who come from families that have an income of \$50,000 or less will have no fees for tuition. Again I say to my colleagues: How can that not have an implication for every single one of us? I think it's also important to say this is a new grant that is revenue neutral.

Avec la plus grande concentration francophone dans ma circonscription d'Ottawa–Orléans, je suis fière aujourd'hui de partager pour dire haut et fort que notre gouvernement investit dans leur futur. L'investissement dans notre collègue La Cité, à Ottawa, bâtit un plus grand accès pour les francophones de ma communauté à une

éducation supérieure dans leur langue maternelle, et aidera aussi nos jeunes entrepreneurs pour la création d'un centre d'innovation et d'entrepreneuriat.

En investissant dans ce centre, nous investissons dans notre jeunesse francophone pour s'assurer qu'elle puisse faire profiter leurs entreprises ici-même, tout en les aidant à exporter leurs produits à l'échelle mondiale.

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We want families and people to have the best end-of-life care. This province has great newborn programs that help families care for their infants in their first moments in the world, but we still needed to do work on helping those seeking end-of-life care options.

I have to say, Mr. Speaker, during our pre-budget consultation on the travelling finance committee, we heard about the investment and the need. I have to also pay respect to the member from Ottawa South, my colleague, who lobbied and asked and met several families across the province on that issue. I'm very happy to see that our government will be investing \$75 million in palliative care.

Another great investment in our budget—again, we may not hear this from the opposition—also addressed specialized health care for those who have suffered pregnancy loss. I wanted to highlight this today because as a friend, a family member, a mother and also a former social worker, I have known people who have gone through the silent tragedy of a miscarriage. For far too long, families were expected to just get over it, and many were left shattered. Stillbirth changes family and marriage, and as it stood, our health care system failed these people in a time of great need and suffering. That is why I am so proud that our government, through the advocacy of my colleague the member from Eglinton–Lawrence, will be providing \$1 million to support services for those affected by pregnancy and infant loss. That includes resources and training for the volunteers and support for the families and the parents.

One aspect I need to mention is the fact that vaccination for shingles will be offered free of charge for seniors between 65 and 70 years of age. I have to say, on Friday I was sharing this news with seniors in my community, and they applauded this, Mr. Speaker. Certainly this is something very important.

Another great thing I need to share today is the fact of our investment regarding the Special Needs Strategy. Over and over I've heard family members dealing with the issue of autism. It will mean a lot to the residents of my community and the families of my community—our \$333-million investment over five years in autism services.

I want to leave some time for my colleagues. They're going to start looking at me because I'm speaking too long and I'm getting the boo-boo, but I could talk and talk about how this budget is having a real impact in each of our communities. I'll leave the floor to the rest of my colleagues.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I'm pleased to recognize the member for Ottawa South.

Mr. John Fraser: Thank you very much—

Hon. Steven Del Duca: You got a haircut.

Mr. John Fraser: I got a haircut. Yes, I did.

It's a pleasure to speak after my colleague la députée d'Ottawa–Orléans. Merci.

I just simply want to say that this is a budget that I'm particularly proud of, not just for the investments that we made in hospice and palliative care—which I think are really important and I want to say a few words about—but there are another few things that I want to mention as well.

This Legislature received that investment in a way that sent a very clear message to the people out there in the communities who've been doing this work for years: the volunteers, the fundraisers, the practitioners. The reaction of the Legislature was really an indication of all the efforts that are being made in our communities to serve people at the end of their lives, to make sure people can die with dignity.

Community-based hospice palliative care is a community-based initiative that government supports. These investments will go a long way to help hospices—new hospices but also our existing hospices—continue to provide the services that they do.

We've talked about the other investments in health care—the member from Eglinton–Lawrence's bill on pregnancy loss: very important. It's not a big piece of the budget, but it's very important to families and communities.

The thing that I wanted to mention that I really, really think is a difference-maker in this budget is the investment in post-secondary education, increasing access for families who make \$50,000 or less and for families making between \$50,000 and \$83,000. About half of those families will see a really significant boost in support for tuition and education.

Really, what it does is it provides opportunity for all. We know that we're only going to be competitive if we have the smartest, most highly trained individuals. But we also know that opportunity is a thing that has not always been equal. I think this is the great equalizer. The investment in public transit is a great equalizer. It means that people can get to work, can get to appointments, can go shopping, can do a variety of things in an accessible way; and, hopefully, faster as well.

I also did want to mention the clawback and looking at a basic single income, which I think is a very progressive, important thing for us to do. It's something that's been talked about for a long time. I know that I'm very optimistic about the work going forward on that.

To the member from Waterloo: I want her to have faith. Believe. It's there. You may not see it everywhere, but it's there. I firmly believe that we'll work towards getting those things done. There is support on all sides of the House—just like there is for palliative care and things like infant loss. As I've said before—and I don't want to sound too Pollyanna, but I usually do—we share a lot more in common than we lead people to believe.

I just want to finish on that note, Mr. Speaker, and thank you again for the opportunity.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): The member for Etobicoke Centre.

Mr. Yvan Baker: I'm thrilled to get up and speak today about Bill 173, the Jobs for Today and Tomorrow Act. As I was walking up to my seat, some of my colleagues here on the government side were asking me what I was going to talk about. I told them I wasn't 100% sure yet, because the challenge isn't what to talk about, it's what you have to leave out when you've only got five minutes to talk. There's so much that I could say about this budget, Speaker, not just for the people of Ontario, but for the people of my community in Etobicoke Centre, that I'm struggling to figure out how to condense it all.

So I want to just spend a few minutes talking about some points that I thought were particularly exciting for my constituents in Etobicoke Centre. I wanted to also share with you that when the budget came out, I thought a lot about how I was going to communicate about the budget in my community and to people I thought would be interested. Instead of holding a budget breakfast, like I've done in the past, what I decided to do is take future events that my constituency team is already planning to organize—we have a youth advisory group meeting coming up; we have a seniors' advisory group meeting coming up. On Saturday, we had a Patients First consultation where we talked about the various transformations to health care that our government has planned. We decided to add the budget to the agenda of each of those, because I firmly believe that for each of those groups of folks, there are really important points here that will enhance their quality of life.

Just a couple of things that I spoke about on Saturday to the folks who came to the Patients First consultation where we were talking about how to improve health care: I actually walked them through the key elements of the budget as far as health care goes. The first thing I talked to them about was the investments in hospital care, about the plan to provide \$12 billion over 10 years in capital grants to hospitals.

In my community of Etobicoke Centre—we have a hospital just north of us, in the riding of my colleague from Etobicoke North, called Etobicoke General Hospital. It's receiving funding; in fact, shovels will be in the ground very shortly to help expand Etobicoke General.

Interjection.

Mr. Yvan Baker: That's right, a significant amount of money that will enhance the care that people receive, the quality and accessibility of care in my community. That was one thing we talked about, as well as the increase in funding to hospitals.

Another thing I wanted to talk about was the steps that have been taken in community care. Community care is critical in my community. I represent a riding where we have one of the largest populations of seniors of any riding in the province, so community care is critical; not only so we can provide care when people want it and when they need it, but in a more cost-effective way, frankly, that liberates health care resources to help those

who need a hospital and to reduce those wait times and provide them with a better quality of care. So the investments in community care, the increasing of funding by 5% every year, was critical.

Another thing, Speaker, that came up that we talked about a lot was what the government's doing to manage our finances. One of the things I heard about during the election campaign was the importance of making sure that we make important investments but that we are also in a position financially where we can support the programs that the people of Ontario care about. Some of the folks whom I spoke to over the weekend—some of them were at my Patients First consultation. Some of them were some young people that I had the privilege of going to Guelph to visit and speak to in the riding of my colleague Minister Sandals. One of the things that we talked about a lot was how important it was that we work towards a balanced budget 2017-18, that we balance the budget in 2017-18, because by doing that, we are helping to secure our financial future, which allows us to make the investments in infrastructure, the investments in health care, the investments in community care and the investments in a range of items that will enhance the quality of life for the people of our communities.

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One of the things that I'm really proud of is being one of the many members of a team on Treasury Board, led by Minister Deb Matthews. There are others here who are on Treasury Board, including Minister Sandals, who have worked so hard, along with the staff and the members of the public service, to get us to where we are today, Speaker, where we are way ahead of schedule as far as balancing our budget, and that's excellent news. Again, it shows that not only are we doing this in a way to make sure that our fiscal house is in order, but we're spending tax dollars more wisely. I think a really important element of this, too, is that people—the taxpayers—can take comfort that we're working hard to get better bang for the buck. That's something, as I heard from my constituents and when I was speaking over the weekend, that people in my community and Etobicoke Centre valued very much.

I think the last thing I'll highlight, and then I'll pass it on to our Minister of Transportation, is that there are a number of elements in this budget that are called "Making Everyday Life Easier." I affectionately refer to this section of the budget as the Mike Colle section of the budget. It's making everyday life easier, with things like eliminating the Drive Clean fee and things like capping hospital parking fees. These are the kinds of things that show that, as a government, we're listening and we're working hard to do just that: to make people's lives better.

Speaker, I'm very proud of this budget. I will pass it on to the minister. But I believe that there is so much to talk about, so much that all members on both sides of this House should talk about to their respective constituents. This is a budget that makes our constituents' lives better.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Minister of Transportation.

Hon. Steven Del Duca: It's always an honour to have an opportunity to lend my voice to the debate that takes place here in this chamber and to follow immediately after colleagues, two representing Ottawa, of course, and our other colleague from Etobicoke Centre, all of whom spoke very eloquently about a number of the important aspects of this year's Ontario budget.

It's interesting. I know I could spend some time going through a number of the highlights in the budget. Of course, there are several pages that are devoted to the transportation and transit infrastructure investments that this Ontario government has been making, and will continue to make, that will help support communities right across the province of Ontario.

Earlier today, we heard one of the NDP members from Hamilton. If I understood some of the banter, Speaker, he was complaining that there was nothing in the budget specifically towards Hamilton or with respect to Hamilton. In this budget document, right here on page 69, there's an explicit reference to the Hamilton LRT, which this government is working with that community to fund. In addition, what's not mentioned in the budget is the extension of GO Transit service specifically to Stoney Creek, which is in that particular member's riding.

I would say to that member, and all members of both the NDP and the Conservative caucus, that it's important at this point in time—even though, on this side of the House, we all understand and respect the role that opposition has to play in our democracy, I think if people looked at this budget through what I'll call, I guess, a non-partisan lens—

Mr. Shafiq Qadri: An objective lens.

Hon. Steven Del Duca: —an objective lens. Thank you very much to the member from Etobicoke North, who, I should point out, is 100% right about the fact that we are building an LRT along Finch, through two of Toronto's priority communities, from the new subway station that is being built as part of the Spadina subway extension at Keele and Finch, all the way out to Humber College in Etobicoke North, with a number of stops that will provide tremendous uplift for that community and for this entire region, in terms of helping to create and enable additional connectivity.

But as I was saying earlier, I think that if members from both the Conservative and NDP opposition would take a look at this budget through an objective filter, or through an objective lens, they would understand that cutting across the investments that we're making, cutting across the fiscal responsibility that the finance minister has brought with respect to announcing that this will be the last budget that we have where we show a deficit, and that we will balance next year, while at the same time helping to massively expand access to post-secondary education, while we continue to invest in health care, education and critical infrastructure—all of this really and truly is a road map to build a brighter economic future for the people of Ontario, to create jobs and to significantly enhance quality of life, whether you live in the GTHA or you live in communities like Thunder Bay,

Windsor, Hamilton, London or Guelph. There are so many wonderful communities across this province that I know are extremely happy with the notion that this budget puts forward: that we want to keep building the province up and we want to keep moving the province forward.

The only thing I would say, not so much in response to the debate that has taken place here this afternoon but in response to some of the questioning that we saw earlier today in question period, which of course was our first question period opportunity since the budget was tabled last Thursday: To watch the leaders of both the Conservative Party and the NDP put forward their questions, and also others in their respective caucuses ask questions of our government, it strikes me that there seems to be a great deal of confusion amongst both opposition parties about how it's possible that we have found that solution, that we've found that way forward, that we continue to invest, that we continue to be progressive on this side of the House, that we continue to build the province up, and at the same time, we brought that significant degree of fiscal responsibility and will be balancing the books by next year, as the finance minister has said. I can only tell my friends and colleagues on the other side of the House, from both parties, that this is the kind of budget that you create when you're open-minded, when you're progressive and when, in fact, you listen to the people of Ontario.

I'm very proud of Ontario budget 2016. I'm proud to serve under the leadership of Premier Kathleen Wynne.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Monte McNaughton: Again, I'm happy to rise to talk about Bill 173, the recent Liberal budget that was presented at the Legislature here last week. I want to come back to what I was saying earlier, and that is about the \$308-billion debt. I think it's the greatest risk we have to economic prosperity in this province.

There are some outstanding numbers out of the finance minister's budget this year. I hit on it earlier. Roughly, the \$308-billion debt represents \$22,000 for every man, woman and child living in Ontario. This is the ninth straight budget where this government has failed to balance the books. Along the way, they've doubled the accumulated debt and driven our debt-to-GDP ratio from 27% to over 40% here in Ontario. Take into perspective some of the past debt numbers: 30 years ago, in Ontario, the debt was around \$30 billion; nine years ago, it was \$153 billion—and in this budget, \$308 billion. That is frightening for the people of Ontario, especially for the future generations in this province.

Mr. Speaker, that's why, last week, because of the budget that was coming, I introduced my private member's bill to set a debt ceiling on the debt in the province, to cap Ontario's debt. I really hope that the finance minister and the Liberal government will consider that. I think it's a sensible, reasonable approach to force politicians of all stripes and the government of the day to consider the spending priorities that they have. I think all

of us, as politicians, have a responsibility to the next generation, to our children, not to put this burden on that generation of the people of Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Percy Hatfield: Indeed, it is a pleasure to stand on behalf of the good people in Windsor–Tecumseh and make some observations on what we've heard this afternoon.

It shouldn't come as a surprise to my Liberal colleagues that I did not wear my rose-coloured glasses today, so I'll give you a bit of a cold, hard reality check about the haves and the have-nots.

In the Windsor area, 70,000 people who have jobs are making less than \$20,000 a year. More than a third of our seniors are living on less than \$20,000. One third of our single moms are living in poverty. One out of every 10 people you pass on the street in Windsor and Essex county is living in poverty. One out of every six kids lives in poverty. Our food banks served about a third of their meals to children. One in every 10 adults accessing food banks in Ontario is employed; they have a job and they still have to go to the food bank. The average life expectancy of a homeless person in Ontario is 39 years.

We are a culturally diverse community in Windsor and Essex county; 24% of our population identify themselves as immigrants, yet many of the new immigrants face economic challenges. They can't find jobs, and about half of these folks are not working at the moment.

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In our region, our youth unemployment rate peaked in 2012 at 24.3%. It was down in 2014 to 16.5%—still totally unacceptable. So we're losing our young people. They're leaving our area to look for work elsewhere. We've lost about 10,000 young people, Speaker, over the past 15 years. That is a significant blow to Windsor and Essex county, and this budget does nothing to bring them back home to their families.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mrs. Laura Albanese: I want to compliment my colleagues who have spoken in regard to this budget. We heard from two members from the Ottawa area. The member from Ottawa–Orléans spoke about the investments in post-secondary education, of l'importance de la francophonie dans notre province and in regards to the shingles vaccine.

The member from Ottawa Centre spoke about palliative care and about the infant loss supports that we will be putting in and that we heard about during our travels with SCOFEA that have great importance to many families.

The member from Etobicoke Centre spoke about the investments in health care, in hospitals and community care, but especially in regards to managing our finances well.

I have to say that the member from Lambton–Kent–Middlesex is fearmongering. He's talking about what's frightening. What's frightening is not thinking of a future

for our young generation, not investing in our future and trying to create jobs, growing the economy and thinking of our environment so we can leave this province in a better situation than we found it in.

To the member from Windsor–Tecumseh: He spoke a lot about poverty, and we know that that area of the province is undergoing very difficult times. But that's why we're increasing social assistance rates. That's why we're focusing on the most vulnerable—again, the importance of creating jobs.

I didn't mention the member for Vaughan, our Minister of Transportation. He spoke about the investments that we're making in infrastructure and in transportation. I know that in my riding we have different projects that are happening and that surround my riding. We have the Kitchener GO line and the Barrie line. We hope to see all-day, two-way GO. And then we had the good news on the UP Express this week.

We have to continue to invest in our future.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): That concludes our time for questions and comments for this—oh, sorry, it doesn't. I apologize. The member for Perth–Wellington.

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: We're so eager to comment on these speeches here that sometimes we get carried away because there's so much in this budget that bothers us.

I first wanted to talk about the comments from the member from Ottawa South. Certainly I commend his efforts on the hospice and palliative care. I was a member of our local hospice board in North Perth and my wife is currently a board member of the hospice. I know the work that they do and how important it is to the community, so I want to thank you for your efforts.

The bothersome part about this whole thing is that the debt that is projected is building up to \$308 billion. Speaker, that is more than twice what this government inherited when they first came to power in 2003. If we are to continue on with the social programs that we're used to in this province, when we continue to build up these debt loads, one of these days it's just not going to happen. We're going to have to face the music that we can't afford some of these things. We need to protect our health care systems. We need to protect all these values that we deem important in this province, but in continuing to build up a debt like this government has done, one of these days it's not going to happen. We're going to have to face some real hard facts that we can't afford some of these things.

I think that is what has got Ontarians bothered. I had comments this weekend from people who had watched the budget speech last week: "How much money do we have to borrow before this government finally realizes that it's unaffordable?"

Like I say, there are things in it that I compliment the government on, but certainly their budget and their projections on debt are not one of them.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): That concludes our questions and comments. I return to the member for Ottawa–Orléans.

Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde: I see on this side of the House a lot of commitment to continue to grow our economy and create the jobs for today and tomorrow. Certainly, I hear and I know that in some parts of Ontario, there is still a need to continue that part of the investment. But when I hear the opposition party, the PC Party, talking about their plan, I see no plan. I really don't see a plan. Actually, I was saying that I would call it the fiscal fantasyland.

When I first took office in 2014, I saw a budget that really was going to transform—the biggest infrastructure investment in the history of this province. We continue to do so. Our investment is \$116 billion over 12 years, and \$15 billion of that investment will be dedicated for outside of the GTHA. I wanted to speak on that because, during my campaign, I strongly supported phase 2 of an LRT in my community of Ottawa–Orléans. I was very happy to see that in this budget, there is that reference that an LRT could be considered with cost-sharing between the municipality and our federal partner. We will continue that aspect.

I want to reflect back a little bit. When it comes to our plan to balance the books, we hear from the opposition that we are creating a lot of frightening aspects in the province. I just want to mention something. When I first was elected, these members were actually campaigning on a plan to balance the books by firing 100,000 people. I have to say that their current leader was actually there—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Thank you very much.

Further debate?

Mr. Bill Walker: I'm going to start off by offering a minute of praise to my colleague Vic Fedeli from Nipissing. He's our finance critic, he's the former mayor of North Bay and he's a very successful businessman and entrepreneur. Frankly, he does not need to be here. He's here because he cares. He's here because he wants to make a difference for the people of Ontario. I'm thankful to have him in our caucus and am privileged to serve with him.

He always looks at every issue. He has been our critic and does a bang-up job in looking through all of the areas with a balanced outlook. He's trying to find positives, but at the end of the day, he also puts some thought processes forward for this government.

He asked three things: He wanted energy rates to be controlled and brought down wherever possible; he wanted to make sure there was a lot better improvement of front-line health care; and he wanted to see some control of the debt. Really, none of those was significantly covered in this budget.

I want to suggest to you, Mr. Speaker, that Bill 173, the Jobs for Today and Tomorrow Act—about the only way I could get my head around that title really being appropriate is that our children and our grandchildren are going to have a job of digging out of debt for their entire lifetime. That's not a good statement to be making to start off my speech.

I'm going to give the government credit in regard to, at first glance, there being funding in there for autism;

good news, in some cases, for the less privileged for tuition fees; money for hospices; hospital administration and operational funding; and some infrastructure funding. Those are good things that I found in the budget. I can support those because I believe they're going to help our people in Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound and across this province.

However, I think you have to look beyond just the baubles that they put in the window to make people kind of forget the rest of the details of the budget. This government is spinning a disingenuous narrative. The promises that they continue to make—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): You can't use that word, "disingenuous." I would ask the member to withdraw.

1700

Mr. Bill Walker: My apologies. I withdraw, Mr. Speaker.

The key promises are not what they seem and appear to be once you start looking at the detail in the rest of the document. Once you get up close to the details hashed out inside of the 346 budget papers, it really begins to take its true shape. They give with one hand and they take away with the other.

Ask the people of Ontario: "After 12 years of this Liberal government—after this budget—are you better off?" I think we know the answer to that, if people really look at the whole picture and really look back and say, "Am I better off, every day of my life?"

The promise of a free education or free tuition, to quote from the finance minister, isn't really free if you look at all the details. I think people have been led with that myth: "My son or daughter is going to get an absolutely full pour for education here." That's not the case, if you read through the budget.

What he didn't say in the speech is that this promise covers only the cost of "average" tuition, a very specific word put in there. He didn't say that it applies only to the provincial portion of education costs—again, very specific if you read the detail. And it covers only those students whose family income is under \$50,000. The details are on page 104: "Ontario's student aid transformation will make average tuition free for students with financial need from families with incomes of \$50,000 or lower...."

If it was truly free tuition, as the minister said in his speech on Thursday, then the budget papers would not be using the words "average tuition free." Read the detail, Mr. Speaker. What this means is that the Liberal government will cover about \$4,000, and whatever remains will still have to be paid by the student. This could be \$2,000 more, \$5,000 more—who knows?—depending on the course of learning. So, again, it's not exactly as it appears in the 30-second sound bite.

Furthermore, this funding criteria applies to about 30% of the students, if even that. I very much applaud any government, of any stripe, that's going to help those less fortunate, those people that truly need our support to give them that hand up. Education, as we know, is pivotal

to the success of a person throughout their lifetime. But at the end of the day, let's not sell them a bill of goods that says, "Everything is free-pour here," when at the end of the day that's not going to be. That's going to disappoint a lot of people. A significant number of students won't be able to receive any or full funding for college or university.

On the question of strengthening education, as the Liberal government likes to spin it, I want to add that there was also nothing in the budget to help keep our small, rural schools from closing. My riding of Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound is facing massive closures under the Liberal government's new education agenda. This agenda threatens to wipe out as many as 18 schools, affecting 5,000 student spaces. That's over one third of the total number of schools overseen by the Bluewater District School Board.

In my opinion, closing a school is a quick fix when they're facing an antiquated school funding formula that has created a plethora of problems in the education system. As I've always said, for too long, students in rural and northern Ontario have been cheated out of the resources they need to succeed, because this government—this Liberal government—has at no time reviewed the school funding formula. I do not see anything in this budget to help stop rural schools from closing. This inaction is especially disappointing to parents, who heard your government promise in the last three provincial elections that it would not only review but also fix the funding formula.

So, again, I stand here. I fought two elections with this as a key point, and then each time they've come out, just before election, with "we'll review; we'll fix." We're not there still, and those schools, sadly, are probably going to end up closing, despite us trying to fight as much as we can and bring this government back to the table, to say, "You're shutting down rural Ontario. You're taking the very fabric of a community out, in many cases, by closing that school."

The provincial funding formula drives how the money the board receives is spent. To this effect, the trustees of Bluewater District School Board passed a motion to essentially remind the government of its promise to review and fix the formula. The resolution said, "Be it resolved that Bluewater District School Board urges the government to move forward with a review of all grant categories to ensure that the funding model aligns to actual cost drivers, and the government review the funding model in its entirety to ensure that all school boards are receiving an adequate and equitable level of funding and that OPSBA continue to advocate for a fair funding model through whatever avenues are most appropriate, and a copy of the motion be forwarded to all public school boards represented by OPSBA."

A promise made, in my world, is a promise to be kept, not just election fodder. The school—a school—in any rural or northern community is a focal point. For its people, the school may be the only place where they have contact with other local people. As such, the school is the heart of their community.

Another major concern is that this policy of the Liberal government on school closures is also putting us on the brink of the largest downsizing of our public school system ever undertaken by any government in Ontario. This new vision certainly runs contrary to the principles of Dr. Egerton Ryerson, Ontario's founding father of public education, and one the Minister of Education herself emphasized in her maiden speech back in 2003. Again, I did not see anything in the budget that reiterated the campaign promises of saving community schools across rural and northern Ontario.

Mr. Speaker, my constituents really wanted to hear a plan about making energy rates affordable. How many times have we, my colleagues and members of the third party, stood in this House and told people and this government about the hardship that their energy policies are causing families in Ontario?

Two winters ago, in my riding, as many as 60 households were cut off from hydro because families were unable to pay the bill. It's simply not acceptable. And knowing that they're going to double or triple—and there's no apology from them at all. They just say, "Sorry about your luck. Drive on. Suck it up." It's just not right. We wanted to see something in this budget that said they are actually listening to the people of Ontario and addressing this need.

It's not just the low-income households that are struggling. The skyrocketing rates are also hitting the middle class, seniors on fixed incomes, public institutions, places like hospitals, schools, libraries, recreation centres. Mr. Speaker, their operational costs cannot be controlled when hydro is doubling and tripling. I am sure you're hearing it in your riding. I'm sure everyone in here is seeing this. It may be non-direct to some people but at the end of the day, it's starting to come home. People are starting to realize how much this is—and there are nurses being fired from hospitals across this province because they have to balance their budgets, and those fixed energy prices are a huge part of that.

Businesses of all sizes are telling me, "I just can't find Ontario to be affordable anymore. I cannot come back here and be competitive." I have businesses saying, "I want to expand but I am hesitant. If they're going to double and triple—plus bring in the ORPP plus more red tape—I'm just not certain this is where I want to do business." That's sad. Mr. Fedeli shared with us a company that spent \$100 million on a greenhouse. He was over the moon; he thought it was here. But no, they went to Ohio, I believe it was, because of this uncompetitive marketplace that this government has created over their 12 years.

Consider the rate hikes since they took power in 2003: over \$1,000 a year. The Auditor General said we pay on average 12 cents per kilowatt today compared to three cents across other jurisdictions.

We also pay a litany of surcharges, the worst of which is the global adjustment, fees that the Auditor General said cost Ontario's 1.3 million customers \$37 billion in overpayments in just nine years. That's on page 94 of the

2015 AG's annual report. Compare this to pre-2003, when Ontarians were paying four cents per kilowatt. If the average residential consumption is 1,000 kilowatts per month, this means we went from paying around \$480 per year in 2003 to paying just shy of \$1,500 a year today for just the energy consumed. Most people can't take those kinds of increases and just keep rolling along. When you add on the distribution charges and other fees, your average bill is even higher.

This budget touts the Ontario Electricity Support Program that may save a family about \$30 a month if they qualify. Mr. Speaker, I would suggest to you this is, again, a little bit of Liberalnomics. They give you a break of \$360—of your own money, by the way—and charge you \$1,000 more and think the world is rosy: "It's all good; we're leading the world here." This theory has resulted in the Liberal government being responsible for \$308 billion in debt, the highest in our province's history.

Page 156 says, and again I quote: "The Ontario Electricity Support Program (OESP) is available to provide an ongoing credit directly on the electricity bills of eligible low-income households, as of January 1, 2016. Qualifying low-income Ontarians are eligible to apply for and receive a monthly credit of \$30 to \$50...."

I spoke with my constituents about the support program and here are some of the complaints I heard: A majority was told their application wasn't filled out properly. They were told they didn't sign the form in the right space and on the right line. They were locked out of the application process when they tried to make corrections to the application online. Filling out the application is absolute confusion. A number of constituents said that the agencies helping out with the application process were just as confused and unsure of where to report income tax. Is it line 206 or 226? Mr. Speaker, it's a challenge.

Pat Morris of Hanover—and I credit her; she's on the local radio station and she holds me accountable—said, "It's pretty obvious that if you have a computer and printer to get the application form, you are in; but if you don't, then you are out. Most people, seniors in particular, who are living on \$28,000 or less a year, are lucky to be able to afford a phone, let alone Internet service and a computer. All in all, this program is a joke."

Mr. Speaker, as I said in this House last week, we presented the government with our key budget asks that would give families cheaper energy rates, better front-line health care services and put the province on a path to paying down the debt. All three recommendations are reasonable, responsible and achievable, but most importantly, they are the priorities of my constituents of Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound and what they need and want this government to address immediately.

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These recommendations were also part of our effort to ensure that this Liberal government does not cut another \$54 million in health care funding, as they did in last year's budget. How many long-term-care beds could that

\$54 million have built? How many of the 24,000 seniors on the wait-list could have been paired with a bed if you'd invested that money in long-term care?

I will give the government credit for listening to the recommendations of the long-term-care association with regard to making annual investments in Behavioural Supports Ontario, but where's the rest of what they had promised for long-term care?

You have 309 long-term-care homes in Ontario that were built to 1970s design standards and that are crumbling. You have 30,000 beds that need to be rebuilt, that you promised to rebuild—yet again, a promise made and, sadly, a promise broken.

You have 24,000 seniors without access to a nursing bed—a wait-list that will double in six or seven years, to 50,000-plus seniors. Where is their plan to build new beds? Even if you build the beds you promised, and no one trusts that you will do so, what about the doubling of seniors? The baby boomers are moving forward. They are getting up in years, and they are coming at us like a tsunami. Everyone has known about this for years, and yet today we still have to challenge the associate minister, asking her for a credible plan.

Their budget dedicated a mere 70 words to this critical file. Page 120 reads:

"The province is continuing to improve the long-term-care homes sector... the government will increase its investment in resident care needs by 2% a year over the next three years.

"Beginning in 2016-17, the government will invest an additional \$10 million annually in Behavioural Supports Ontario, for initiatives to help residents with dementia and other complex behaviours and neurological conditions."

Mr. Speaker, we've spoken to the long-term-care association. We've spoken to the Ontario Association of Non-Profit Homes and Services for Seniors. They want quality food, they want a minimum four hours of care, and they want better supports. So what did the government do? Again, they put a bauble in the window. Ten million dollars sounds good if you purposely don't tell people—the reality is much, much more significant than what's really required to just maintain care at that level. The 2% increase in resident care needs is welcome, but I trust that the government realizes this increase will be eaten up by rising operating costs and exorbitant hydro costs. More importantly, it falls short of the 14% increase in the homes' operating costs, as indicated by the Ontario Long Term Care Association.

Mr. Speaker, this is another prime example, typically at budget time, of "dangle the carrot, snatch the plate" Liberalnomics, yet again. They are spin masters. If I'm going to give them any credit, they are definitely spin masters at the feel-good statement. But I suggest to the people of Ontario, be wary of the details. We have to look beyond just the 10-second headline. They like to put out fancy baubles, aspirational goals and even stretch goals. But do you know what? The people will see through this because reality is starting to come home.

When they're not able to find the services in their hospitals, when they're not able to get long-term-care homes, when they're not able to find mental health resources for their children and their family members, that's a result of overspending, mismanagement and huge, horrific waste—billions of dollars that could be going there.

And that's not even to talk about, Mr. Speaker, then adding to the gigantic debt burden that they have created in their 12 years. We spend \$12 billion a year just on interest payments. Every day in my office, on the street or out at public events, when people say to me, "What could be different?"—I could say to you that they could live within their means like you do with your home budget. You could have that \$12 billion to put into programs and services to help the less fortunate. Our students, our educational system, our health care could be transformed, to make sure that we get all of the funds we need.

Mr. Speaker, as I said earlier in my comments, they dangle the carrot and they take the plate. Let's just look at a couple of prime examples.

Hospital funding: They put in \$345 million, but what they didn't share with you very publicly is that they actually cut \$107 million annually that's raised through the Ontario Lottery and Gaming Corp. There has been a five-year freeze to those hospitals, and their energy—they're still predicting they're going to triple over the next four years. So that's going to eat up that increase in a pretty short period. Then, they're going to throw on the ORPP, which again is going to have a huge, significant impact on operations like hospitals.

Long-term care—again, resident care: "We're going to give you 2% more a year." That's wonderful, except the true physical need just to maintain the services is 14% in increased costs that this government has imposed.

Seniors: A free vaccine—but they cut the home renovation tax credit so that people could live in more affordable homes.

And they continue to bring out beer and wine as the little bauble in the window; meanwhile, they're selling Hydro One.

I've challenged the minister responsible for long-term care to release her plan for building new nursing home beds. I asked, "If you could commit to 30,000 beds, surely to goodness you could tell me where and when the beds would be built?" Mr. Speaker, I got deafening silence.

Another critical component of long-term care the budget fell short on was safe staffing levels. We hear this over and over. We heard, in pre-budget hearings, testimonies from front-line staff for safer staffing levels to stem the rise of patient attacks in long-term-care homes.

Just this morning, my office took a call from 87-year-old Shirley Turnbull, who called to voice the same concerns. She said the staff looking after her were overwhelmed, stressed out and unable to tend to her needs properly. The fact that Ontario's nursing homes have lower staffing levels than any other jurisdiction across Canada and globally is appalling.

Mr. Speaker, small and rural municipalities are curious to know if the Liberal promise to spend \$160 billion on infrastructure over the next 12 years means you'll actually start approving projects this time. How many times is this Liberal government going to re-announce this? How many shovels are actually going to hit the ground, so that we can see the results of all of this? In my riding, I have yet to hear from one municipality that was approved for small-communities funding. After receiving applications for water, sewer, airports and even broadband infrastructure projects, this Liberal government approved none of them.

This budget is really going to hit families and seniors hard in the pocketbook. This budget may have sounded good at first glance, but in the end, Ontarians across the board will pay more. The cost of living is going to go up after this budget is passed. Drug deductibles for seniors will nearly double, from \$100 to \$170 starting in August, which means that you are making medications more expensive.

A 4.3-cent-per-litre hike in gasoline prices, a \$5-per-month increase in natural gas and propane, 4.7-cent-per-litre increase in diesel—Ontarians are going to feel the impact of the Liberal cap-and-trade plan every day. We support climate control, but what I want to see this government do is to ensure that those dollars are put into a trust fund that actually goes to address climate control, not a slush fund to help them balance their budget, on which they have overspent egregiously.

Mr. Speaker, we asked, and they say they're listening. Some 80% of Ontarians do not want them to sell Hydro One; they want them to hold on to that asset and ensure that the money is there when they need it. Short-term gain for long-term pain.

We wanted lower hydro prices, we wanted better and sustainable health care and we wanted them to address the debt. They've put a lot of baubles in the window, and there are some little, minor good pieces if you take them away from the whole of this budget, but at the end of the day, we really feel that this government has yet again missed the train to rein in their overspending and ensure that Ontarians' needs are put first.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Paul Miller: I'd like to thank the member from Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound. He does his homework, and he certainly comes out with some good points. Congratulations on your submission.

Mr. Speaker, I'm concerned. There's going to be a lot of money put into infrastructure over the next nine to 10 years, according to the Liberal government. What I'm concerned about is the procurement programs of the province. What I want to see in those procurement programs is some protection for Ontario trades and crafts, and also for management companies.

I'll give you an example. We had a bit of a horror story in Hamilton with the new stadium. It still isn't completed, a year and a half after it should have been completed. We had a French company managing, and

then the sub-trades below them. This company has made a mess of that stadium.

You're telling me that in Ontario and Canada, we don't have companies big enough to build a stadium? We don't have companies in Canada that can take on these types of projects? Who built Vancouver? Who built Calgary? Who built the Montreal Olympics? A lot of Canadian companies.

So why are we continually giving contracts to foreign companies? Some of our contractors are not getting the work; they're subcontracting to people from out of province or out of the country. These new trade deals that we're signing, is there any protection, or can they bring in whoever they want, displace our workers, our people, from good-paying jobs?

This government says it's going to create all these hundreds of thousands of jobs over the next 10 years. That's great, if the jobs are in Ontario, for the people who live in Ontario and who pay the taxes that are paying for the projects that are being built. That's what I want to see, and I don't see any of that in any of their contracts. Until that happens, I think there could be a lot of questioning of the spending of money: Who is it going to, where is it going to, and when is it going to come home?

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The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mrs. Kathryn McGarry: It's always a pleasure to rise on behalf of my constituents in my riding of Cambridge to add my comments on their behalf to the debate.

I was listening very carefully to the member from Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound. One of the things that he mentioned was the possibility of school closures. This is a reality amongst our rural communities, where there is declining enrolment. On page 160 in the budget book, we are showing that we are continuing our support of community hubs. Community hubs are using some of those spaces in order to be able to consolidate services. For instance, you can use this space for a consolidation of services such as social, legal, medical and dental services under one roof. We're continuing our support in that direction. So I'm fairly proud of that. The reality is that there is declining enrolment in some of our rural schools.

The other thing that I wanted to talk about: The member was talking about long-term-care beds. I know that, under the last Conservative government, they closed 28 hospitals and shut over 7,000 beds in Ontario. When this government came in in 2003, they invested heavily to try and replace some of that as our burgeoning senior population was coming through—the baby boomers. It took a lot to replace some of those.

We are delivering on our commitment to ensure that long-term-care beds are being renovated from four-bed to two-bed units. It's over a 10-year period. I'm very proud of Hilltop nursing home in my riding of Cambridge, which underwent expansion and renovation from four-bed to two-bed units a few years ago. Our other long-term-care facility in Cambridge is doing their planning right now to undergo that.

So I'm proud of this government. I'm proud of the investment in health care and that we are on track to balancing the budget in 2017-18.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Lorne Coe: My congratulations to the member from Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound for his very cogent and eloquent remarks on the budget.

Earlier today in question period, Mr. Speaker, we had some discussion about seniors and the effect of the government's action in the budget on seniors, particularly as it relates to seniors having to pay substantially more for their prescriptions. Isn't it ironic that we have, on one hand, an aging demographic across the province and we have a government that put in place a seniors' strategy which is clearly failing, and yet we have a budget that comes forward and asks seniors to pay substantially more for their prescriptions?

For example, the deductible for the Ontario Drug Benefit Program for seniors goes up from its current level of \$100 to \$170, and individual prescriptions will go up as well. That, overall, is an effect on seniors that is going to affect their quality of life, particularly in the riding that I represent in Whitby–Oshawa.

Turning for a moment, Mr. Speaker, also, to the government cancelling the tuition and education tax credit two years before they implement a new student grant: University and college students overall will be out \$165 million in financial support. Clearly, this caucus supports improving access to education. That being said, 70% of Ontario families aren't eligible for the full benefit of the Ontario Student Grant.

Another important sector of my riding in Whitby–Oshawa is the agricultural sector, and we have in the budget for the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs—it's going to be cut by \$27 million as compared to last year.

Taken together, the effect is poor, and, in effect, that's going to be contrary to what residents in Whitby–Oshawa want.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. John Vanthof: It's always an honour to be able to stand in the House and, today, to respond to the member from Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound. As most of us do, he referred to a lot of issues that are happening in his riding due to this budget, and I commend him for it.

I also had the opportunity to listen to the member from Etobicoke North, and he also commented on the great things that were happening in his riding because of the budget, how transit was increasing and all of these things. You know what? That's a good thing. There are lots of people there. No problem.

Also, no one should accuse the NDP of not being in favour of reducing carbon. We're fully in favour. Having said that, the people in northern Ontario who are going to have to pay 4.3 cents more for gas, what they want to know is where that money is going to go. My constituents don't have the option of all this new transit, like

what's happening in Etobicoke North. Actually, our transit, as we speak, is being cut, so people are actually having less chance to use public transit.

The last time I checked, for someone who has to drive 50 kilometres to work, just because the budget has been announced, it doesn't mean that it's now 45 kilometres to drive to work. It's still 50 kilometres. So someone who has to drive 50 kilometres to work at Walmart is being penalized, paying their share to reduce carbon, but where is that money going to go? That's what the people in northern Ontario want to know.

The member from Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound talked about how schools are being closed in his riding. Do you know why schools are being closed in his riding and why they're being closed in mine? Because this government is driving people out of rural Ontario by making life unbelievably unaffordable, with no return. That's why.

Again, this tax, if it's going to go to fixing the carbon, fine, but show us where it's going, because we don't see it.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): That concludes our time for questions and comments. I return to the member for Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound.

Mr. Bill Walker: Thank you to all those who spoke.

The member from Hamilton East–Stoney Creek was very gracious in his remarks and suggested that I offered some good information. I trust that's not because I'm wearing an orange shirt today, but it's truly genuine.

The member from Cambridge talked about school closures and school hubs. It's great to see that there's some opportunity for school hubs or community hubs, but at the end of the day, her government promised to review and fix the funding formula for two or three consecutive elections, and they haven't done that. That's a promise broken and not addressed in this budget.

The member from Whitby–Oshawa: I certainly appreciate that he brought up some good points in regard to seniors. Our seniors built this wonderful province. We need to ensure that what we're doing, going forward, is showing them the respect they deserve and ensuring that the programs and services they need are going to be there.

She said she was proud of the government's success so far. Well, then I'd ask her to go over to her associate minister and see if she can get me answers on why the 30,000 beds that they've committed to in two elections have not been built and where the plan is. When I've asked, I haven't even been able to get a copy of the plan of where and when those beds are going to be built. If she's that proud and she wants to stand strong, I would ask her to do that, and challenge her.

The member from Whitby–Oshawa also brought up agriculture. I want to use a quote, because the Minister of Finance said—and I'm going to quote from his little book:

“We grow and produce some of the world's greatest food ...

“Brew great beer and make amazing wine.”

And yet, as he most effectively pointed out, they cut \$28 billion in this budget for agriculture. If we don't have

healthy food, if we don't have the ability to feed our families, the—

Interjection.

Mr. Bill Walker: Sorry?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Million, not billion.

Mr. Bill Walker: Million, sorry. I correct my record if I said billion.

Food is absolutely fundamental, like health care, and we need that.

The member from Timiskaming–Cochrane, again, talked about all the things that we talk about all the time in rural Ontario: the costs to live in Ontario, that they're driving people out of rural Ontario. We want to see that that carbon tax is actually going to address the issue, not a slush fund to cover up their mismanagement, their incompetence and their overspending in the last 12 years.

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

Mr. Percy Hatfield: It's always an honour to stand on behalf of the residents of Windsor–Tecumseh to bring my voice to this provincial Parliament. It saddens me to say, however, that our area has the highest unemployment rate in the province. When I looked at the cover of the budget document, with the title Jobs for Today and Tomorrow, I expected the contents to include a blueprint or a map detailing where the jobs will come from so that the young people from my area who left to seek employment elsewhere could find their way back home and find a job, and our newest neighbours who immigrated from elsewhere could find suitable employment. Well, I'm still looking.

The news release that was issued when the budget was introduced called it “the next phase of the government's plan to create jobs and economic growth.” I've said it before and I'll say it again: There is no shame in admitting to a mistake. Selling off the public shares in Hydro One is a major mistake. Some 80% of the people in this province don't want it done, 200 municipal councils have passed resolutions saying it shouldn't be done, and yet the Liberals are still following the misguided path.

1730

Not that long ago this afternoon, we heard the Minister of Transportation say they were listening to the people of Ontario. Clearly, they're not. They are committed to using their smoke-and-mirror term of “maximizing the value of government-owned assets.” The problem with that scenario, of course, is that these are not government-owned assets. They don't belong to the Liberal Party of Ontario; they belong to the people of Ontario, the senior citizens of Ontario, the children of Ontario and the families of Ontario, and we don't want them sold. We want to protect our public assets for generations to come. The hydro distribution network was created for the public good, not for private profit—not for the benefit of the friends of the Liberal Party of Ontario.

The Financial Accountability Officer has already told all of us that over the long term, the sell-off of shares in Hydro One will cost all of us \$500 million, money that could have been spent on hospitals and schools, roads

and bridges, sewers, and by using the more traditional methods of paying for infrastructure projects instead of selling the public shares of Hydro One for the short-term goal of making the Liberal budget books appear just a little bit better. I say shame, shame, shame.

While we're playing the shame game, let's talk about this new budget and what it means to people with disabilities in this province. That will be a very short conversation because there's very little of any consequence in these 350 pages that deals in any way with the Ontarians with Disabilities Act. In fact, one of the brightest guys I've ever met, David Lepofsky, just reminded me about that on Friday. The Liberals brought in the ODA more than 10 years ago and yet he says the act "has not made a significant difference in the lives of people with disabilities."

There are 1.8 million people in Ontario with a disability—nearly two million. The goal is for the province to be fully accessible by 2025. David Lepofsky has been practising law in Ontario for 35 years. He's one of the most recognized and respected disability activists in Canada, and when he speaks, the members of this chamber should be listening.

He called out the Liberals last week, saying, "Over 1.8 million Ontarians with a physical, mental, sensory, learning, intellectual or communication disability still face far too many unfair accessibility barriers every day, when they try to get a job, shop in stores, go to school or university, get health care services, find a place to live, eat in restaurants, use a taxi, public transit, or other public services, or deal with their municipal or provincial government."

David Lepofsky says the Liberals have no comprehensive plan to ensure that we will reach the 2025 goal of a barrier-free Ontario. The document, the so-called Jobs for Today and Tomorrow—that budget document is a snow job, not a jobs plan.

Let me remind you what a great Canadian once said. A man who recently served us as Ontario's Lieutenant Governor, David Onley, was speaking about the problems that people with disabilities have in finding suitable employment. Our former Lieutenant Governor said that massive disability unemployment isn't just a national crisis; it's a national shame.

Well, you can take those words to the bank. I wouldn't be taking this Jobs for Today and Tomorrow book to the bank unless it was a snow bank, because, as I said, it's more of a snow job pretending to be a blueprint for a better tomorrow. I guess you can fool some of the people some of the time, but you can't fool most of us with this one.

Look, I'll be frank. There are a few good points in here. I give you that. Who can argue with free tuition? Who can argue with better palliative care and more money for hospices? When I was living in St. John's, Newfoundland, Premier Joey Smallwood—and I admit it was more than a few years ago. Joey, at the time, was the only living Father of Confederation. Newfoundland became part of Canada in 1949—as a matter of fact, on April 1. There's a joke there somewhere.

Anyway, until 1968, when I entered Memorial University, Joey had provided free tuition for everyone going to university in Newfoundland regardless of income levels—free tuition—because he knew Newfoundland had to grow its economy, to diversify from fishing and forestry and mining, and the way to do that was to set the conditions for an educated workforce, to stimulate their creativity, to encourage them to reach for the stars and to believe that they could become anything they ever dreamed about. Doctors, lawyers, scientists, artists—the world was the doorstep. You wouldn't recognize Newfoundland's economy today compared to what it was back in the 1950s and 1960s.

I will argue that free tuition for those generations of young Newfoundland students was a major reason for the dramatic turnaround, and I hope we can see similar results in Ontario. If so, we should be expanding the free-tuition offer to more young people in the years ahead.

Let me speak for a moment about the innovation-driven economy. Much has been made about the Liberal plan to grow research and development capacity and innovation technologies. We've heard of a \$35-million fund which will be spread over five years, and a new partnership in this so-called advanced manufacturing consortium. This new scheme will include three university campuses: McMaster, Waterloo and Western. Academics will partner with industry and focus on long-term industrial innovation projects. Okay, but they'll be playing catch-up to some extent because we've been doing that for some years now down in Windsor and Essex county. We've been active not only at the University of Windsor but at St. Clair College as well.

In fact, our mayor and others in the community are somewhat bewildered as to why this new technology corridor will stop in London. Much is being said in our community about this. The headline in the Windsor Star on the day following the budget was, "Budget Overlooks Windsor." That's because there's \$50 million in there for the Perimeter Institute for Theoretical Physics in Waterloo as they seek advances in information technology in areas such as quantum computing. There's a partnership fund of \$20 million to be spent over three years to better connect colleges and companies in Ontario with applied research projects. Journalists at the Star were compelled to highlight that the city was left out of a new \$100-million innovation super-corridor plan.

It's no secret that, for many years, folks in Windsor and Essex county have felt left out. We've heard our neighbours say that Ontario ends in London. I've heard that for more than 40 years. I'm not saying it's true, but there is a perception out there—and as you know, in politics, perception can soon become reality. I would hope not. I remember clearly a day after the last provincial election. The Premier was quoted as saying that she wouldn't forget about Windsor. I took her word then and I take her at her word today. It would be a shame to forget about the region in the province with the highest unemployment rate. Seriously, how could you ever expect to win a seat in that region again if you did focus

all of your spending on other parts of the province? It doesn't make sense.

Here's a quote from Windsor Mayor Drew Dilkens, as reported in the Windsor Star on the budget: "I was disappointed that Windsor wasn't included in the consortium because I believe we have a lot to offer. In this city we have a huge manufacturing cluster that already exists. It's been our bread and butter in this community and we've got a world-class university right here."

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When asked for a comment by the Star, economic development, employment and infrastructure minister Brad Duguid said Windsor wasn't forgotten. The minister was quoted as saying, "Windsor has some really interesting and exciting advances being made in a lot of the automotive technology and it cannot be ignored—and it's not ignored—but the centre of the innovation hub in the central part of Ontario remains the Toronto-Waterloo corridor."

That Star story says that's where the 3D printing and digital components and devices will be developed, but even Mike Moffat, an economist at the Ivey Business School, was surprised that Windsor isn't recognized by this Liberal government as an innovation hub due to our proximity to Detroit and all the innovation we have developed within the automotive industry. So be it.

Minister Duguid has said, "We're not going to quit investing in Windsor—in infrastructure, in companies—until we get that unemployment down to an acceptable level." I will accept the minister at his word and I look forward to the day when we see some provincial announcements in that regard.

We all know there are great things happening in our region. Because the Premier and the minister have both said Windsor will not be forgotten, part of my role in opposition is to remind them of that promise and to hold them to account. So will people such as Brent McPhail, the president of Brave Control Solutions. His company was just ranked one of Canada's fastest-growing small businesses by the Profit 500 guide.

Not being included in the innovative corridor will hurt companies such as Brave Control Solutions from attracting new employees; that is one of the fears that Brent McPhail sees coming out of this Liberal snub. So to the minister: Allow me to extend an invitation to come down and speak to the Windsor and district chamber of commerce at your earliest opportunity. Chamber president and CEO Matt Marchand was quoted in the Windsor Star on Friday when speaking about this new corridor, saying, "You shouldn't write off the tech sector in Windsor. It is disappointing to see it excluded from this."

In case you missed it, in January, the unemployment rate in Windsor was 9.3%, so you can understand our sensitivity when it comes to job creation and future prospects for job creation in Windsor and Essex county.

Where else could this budget document have created jobs? Well, if the hare-brained scheme that eliminated our slots at Windsor Raceway and led to the collapse and

closure of the raceway—if that decision had been reversed, we could have seen 3,000 local jobs created as well as the construction jobs as we built the new track. I say to the Liberals that if you wanted to create jobs, that one idea should be a no-brainer.

You know, there are a ton of great ideas out there for job creation right across Ontario. Many of us met with representatives last week at the Ontario Good Roads Association and the Rural Ontario Municipal Association at their annual conference.

Thunder Bay would have liked to have seen more money in the budget for a number of things: dealing with marginalized people, more money for social services and more money for subsidized social housing in their community. Besides more money for roads, bridges and sewers, Mayor Keith Hobbs told us about the plans they have for their event and convention centre.

I think everyone in the chamber today has heard about the rat hole they have in Thunder Bay, their district jail. It's overcrowded, the working conditions are deplorable, and unless I missed it—I know you'll correct me if I have—there's nothing in there for the improvements that are needed at the Thunder Bay district jail. Most of the people incarcerated there are innocent. They haven't been convicted of anything yet. It's a disgrace, the conditions that they're forced to live in.

We learned from Thunder Bay about the 25 mines that are ready to roll if and when the Liberals ever get around to providing transportation links and hydro to the mine sites. I won't even mention the Ring of Fire, but if you hooked up the First Nations communities, the north would blossom.

Another thing this budget could have addressed for people in the north is a solution to the high cost of non-medical patient transfers being handled by EMS personnel. We in the south have other options and they are not as expensive, so why wouldn't the government have something in here to resolve that long-standing issue in the north?

The Eastern Ontario Wardens' Caucus told us about the poor cellular networks they have to deal with, where 16% of the residents have no cell coverage whatsoever. They also told us about the lack of reliable hydro service. They suggested a very affordable solution of bringing in power from Quebec. They gave us a heads-up that if hydro can't be made more reliable, we could see a major plant pulling out of Napanee because of the lack of reliable power.

Here's another heads-up: Bill 151, the so-called Waste-Free Ontario Act, with the aim of making producers more responsible for recycling their products. Municipal leaders have grown very tired of subsidizing the true cost of providing the blue box recycling service. They want to be consulted; they want to be at the table when the stewards discuss possible changes; they want their voices heard; and I'll tell you, you better be listening.

Whether you're aware of it or not, Vancouver just did something about it. They couldn't get the producers to

pay the true cost of the blue box. The politicians in Vancouver grew tired of the platitudes and the promises. They were using municipal tax dollars to pay 30% of the cost of recycling. So they just said, "The heck with it," and are turning the blue box program over to the producers. They're getting out of it altogether. If they're not going to get the true cost recovered from the producers for picking up the blue box and the recyclables, they're just not going to do it anymore for the people who should be looking at their own packaging and recycling.

That could happen in Ontario, believe it or not. Make no mistake about it: You either pay the municipality the full cost of providing the service or you'll be paying someone else to do it because they won't be doing it anymore.

Now, the government may listen to municipal voices, but it hasn't done a very good job of hearing what is being said because, I can tell you, those municipal voices want changes made. They're growing tired of the promises. They want to see real action, for a change, on a number of fronts.

The leaders of the Ontario Good Roads Association are still befuddled as to why this government can't even find a way to standardize a proper way of measuring the width of a road. You've heard them year after year, and you haven't done anything about it. That doesn't instill confidence in them that you care a hoot about what they have to say.

ROMA leaders want to see more money in the Ontario Municipal Partnership Fund. This budget is trimming that fund from the areas where it is needed most. They're also looking to you for leadership on the power dams taxation issue, which could be a powder keg of resentment if you don't make sure municipal tax bases are protected. They also don't think you have a real plan for expanding natural gas into rural areas of Ontario. It's taking way too much time.

Eastern Ontario mayors want a change in the grant formulas: more attention to formula-based infrastructure money as opposed to application-based funding. They say you guys do a really terrible job of communicating why their grant applications have been unsuccessful. They are waiting for real change in the affordable housing field and will be greatly disappointed if you let them down again in that matter.

The wardens in western Ontario would have liked to see some support for their southwestern integrated fibre technology project. They're also worried that the proposed cap-and-trade bill will delay the expansion of natural gas lines into rural Ontario.

Speaker, I know I've used up most of my time this afternoon, but I want to thank you for your attention while I was speaking.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): You're welcome. Thank you very much. Questions and comments?

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: It's a pleasure to spend a couple of minutes commenting on the member from Windsor-Tecumseh—a very good speaker, I must say.

He makes some valid points. The opposition needs to point out what more we can do, and he certainly handed out a full laundry list. I'm not sure how any government could afford those laundry lists, but I do comment because I think he understands some of the needs in his community.

1750

I'll comment on some of the comments that he brought forward from the Windsor Star this weekend. I didn't see them but I truly trust that's what he said. But he failed to mention some of the comments from the mayor of Tecumseh, the president of AMO. He certainly thought that the budget was a good budget. He forgot to mention it—I'm not sure if it was in the Windsor Star—but that's a comment he made. He was also president of AMO, but I know the member knows that.

I also understand the responsibility of the opposition. I get it, Speaker; I understand.

I had two post-budget get-togethers with the chambers of commerce: one, a breakfast in the west end of Cobourg, and then in Port Hope at the beautiful Rainside Restaurant, with about 35 people attending. They had some questions, but in general I would say they were very supportive of the tuition piece for post-secondary education. They talked about the deficit; it's on everybody's mind, Speaker.

Mr. Bill Walker: They're okay with it?

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: They are very supportive. They know what we went through but also that it's going to come to an end, Speaker.

The municipality he talked about: not happy. I know that every mayor I spoke to on the \$300-million Ontario Community Infrastructure Fund was very supportive. That's what they were asking for, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Jack MacLaren: This budget is more about big debt and deficits than anything else. I don't think we can forget the harsh reality that \$308 billion of debt means that Ontario is the most indebted subnational state in the world. And we're in deficit, so the debt continues to grow. This is \$23,000 for every man, woman and child in the province of Ontario, at a time when our economy is faltering and when we have high unemployment, and yet the government continues to spend.

They think they've made a great achievement by keeping the deficit, which means they're spending more than they bring in, down to \$4.3 billion. They only did this with extraordinary one-time measures: \$850 million from the contingency fund, which was \$1 billion—they raided the rainy-day chest, so we can't fix whatever might happen next year if it's a surprise; \$2.6 billion from a one-time tax on the sale of hydro; and an additional \$1 billion from the sale of Hydro One itself.

We have the most expensive hydro in North America. It's driving industry out of our province. It is impoverishing people in our province like senior citizens and people who are on a limited income.

Next year, they tell us they're going to balance the budget and we will have no deficit. Then, at the same time, we realize they're expecting \$1.9 billion of new income from the cap-and-trade tax, which will come from the same people who are paying the hydro bills and the same ones who are going to pay for the pension plan, which is a payroll tax. Mr. Speaker, we can't afford this government to continue to spend. They're bankrupting the province of Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): The member for Timmins–James Bay.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I listened to the member from Tecumseh. It reminded me of a question I was asked last Friday in regard to the budget by one of our local media. He said, "How can you best describe this budget?" I said, "It's a Liberal budget. It's the best way I could describe it. It's all about smoke and mirrors, and everybody look over here as we mess this up over there."

If you look at item after item in the budget, it's quite telling. The government on the one hand says, "Oh, good news: People are not going to have to pay any tuition if their family income is under \$50,000 a year." They don't say that everybody still has to pay the first \$3,000 no matter what. And they don't talk about there being a whole bunch of people who make more than \$50,000 a year as family income who are not going to qualify for this program whatsoever. Plus you lose your tax credit. So for a lot of people, it actually means you'll be paying more.

The government announced—how many budgets ago?—the Ring of Fire. They were going to fix the Ring of Fire. We were going to get economic development going up in Marten Falls and Webequie and all those points in between. We were going to put \$1 billion they promised three budgets ago. They announced it again in this one. At what point does this government have no shame for reannouncing something for the third or fourth time that you haven't done yet? If the government would have done what they were supposed to do with the Ring of Fire seven or eight years ago, we'd be in a process of building a chromite mine up in the Ring of Fire. Instead, these guys are really good at making announcements and making it look as if they're doing something, but in fact are doing the opposite.

The ultimate is the cap-and-trade system. I'm in favour of some form of mechanism by which we can diminish greenhouse gases, and if you can come up with a good cap-and-trade, I can support that. But this is about shifting money into general revenue and making the working stiff pay for it by all kinds of means.

I think, quite frankly, the government would do well to listen to what the committee says when that bill goes into committee, and make some changes.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): We have time for one last question or comment. I'm pleased to recognize the Minister of Education.

Hon. Liz Sandals: Thank you. I'm pleased to respond to the comments on the budget from the member from Windsor–Tecumseh.

I was a little bit surprised that you characterized the community attitude to the budget, because quite frankly, I think there is some opportunity here for Windsor in the budget. Like you, I come from a university town. I have heard nothing but positive comments over the weekend from the students that I talked to, through to the administrators and faculty members. There has been a really positive reaction to the free tuition for low-income families.

When I look at university enrolment numbers, what I see is that for southern Ontario universities, the University of Windsor has had the highest enrolment drop of any southern Ontario university. To me, that's related to income, which means that families in Windsor aren't able to have their students go. We know that there have been pressures in Windsor in terms of employment and struggling with the economy in the Windsor area. We are actually helping your families who have lower income.

If you get up to \$50,000, average tuition will be free. If you go to \$83,000, about half the kids will get it free. You're up to double \$83,000 before you get nothing. This is a graduated program, so this helps a broad range of family incomes.

I think that this will be a real boon to families in the Windsor–Tecumseh area who need a little bit of extra help to make sure that their kids can get access to the post-secondary education that's going to allow them to get jobs in the future.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): That's it for questions and comments. We return to the member for Windsor–Tecumseh.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: Thank you to everyone who made comments on what I had to say.

Let me, if I could, turn my attention for a moment to my good friend from Northumberland–Quinte West when he talked about the president of AMO—a very good friend of mine—Gary McNamara. Gary has been president for a while. He was president before I was his vice-president, the first time around when he was president at AMO. I was chair of the Large Urban Caucus.

What I wanted to mention to the minister—we all know Gary. They had a lot of chuckles at the ROMA/Good Roads conference—I won't embarrass the minister; I won't say who it was—because one of your ministers who addressed that conference talked about his good friend "Jerry." He didn't call Gary "Jerry" once. He didn't call Gary "Jerry" twice. He called Gary "Jerry" three times during his address. It caused great delight to the delegates who were there. Gary didn't think it was all that funny, but the other people there did.

Anyway, I just mentioned that because you had to mention my good friend—our good friend—Gary McNamara.

I'll say, to the education minister, thank you for those comments. I was quoting the newspaper the day after the budget. In today or tomorrow's Windsor Star, at least in the digital version, the president of the University of Windsor, Alan Wildeman, is downplaying and putting cold water on that criticism about Windsor not being included in the technology corridor, saying not to worry

about it: “Other universities didn’t complain when we got stuff in the past, and we’re not going to complain about it now.” I wasn’t quoting university people; I was quoting people in our community who had a lot to say in the front page, in the headline, in the Windsor Star.

Having said that—I guess I am out of time again. Thank you, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Thank you very much.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): It being 6 of the clock, this House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 9 a.m.

The House adjourned at 1800.

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Bailey, Robert (PC)	Sarnia–Lambton	
Baker, Yvan (LIB)	Etobicoke Centre / Etobicoke-Centre	
Balkissoon, Bas (LIB)	Scarborough–Rouge River	Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée Deputy Speaker / Vice-président
Ballard, Chris (LIB)	Newmarket–Aurora	
Barrett, Toby (PC)	Haldimand–Norfolk	
Berardinetti, Lorenzo (LIB)	Scarborough Southwest / Scarborough-Sud-Ouest	
Bisson, Gilles (NDP)	Timmins–James Bay / Timmins–Baie James	
Bradley, Hon. / L'hon. James J. (LIB)	St. Catharines	Chair of Cabinet / Président du Conseil des ministres Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille Deputy Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint du gouvernement
Brown, Patrick (PC)	Simcoe North / Simcoe-Nord	Leader, Official Opposition / Chef de l'opposition officielle
Campbell, Sarah (NDP)	Kenora–Rainy River	
Chan, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Markham–Unionville	Minister of Citizenship, Immigration and International Trade / Ministre des Affaires civiques, de l'Immigration et du Commerce international
Chiarelli, Hon. / L'hon. Bob (LIB)	Ottawa West–Nepean / Ottawa-Ouest–Nepean	Minister of Energy / Ministre de l'Énergie
Clark, Steve (PC)	Leeds–Grenville	Deputy Leader, Official Opposition / Chef adjoint de l'opposition officielle
Coe, Lorne (PC)	Whitby–Oshawa	
Colle, Mike (LIB)	Eglinton–Lawrence	
Coteau, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Don Valley East / Don Valley-Est	Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport / Ministre du Tourisme, de la Culture et du Sport Minister Responsible for Anti-Racism Minister Responsible for the 2015 Pan and Parapan American Games / Ministre responsable des Jeux panaméricains et parapanaméricains de 2015
Crack, Grant (LIB)	Glengarry–Prescott–Russell	
Damerla, Hon. / L'hon. Dipika (LIB)	Mississauga East–Cooksville / Mississauga-Est–Cooksville	Associate Minister of Health and Long-Term Care (Long-Term Care and Wellness) / Ministre associée de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée (Soins de longue durée et Promotion du mieux-être) Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille Minister of Transportation / Ministre des Transports
Del Duca, Hon. / L'hon. Steven (LIB)	Vaughan	
Delaney, Bob (LIB)	Mississauga–Streetsville	
Dhillon, Vic (LIB)	Brampton West / Brampton-Ouest	
Dickson, Joe (LIB)	Ajax–Pickering	
DiNovo, Cheri (NDP)	Parkdale–High Park	
Dong, Han (LIB)	Trinity–Spadina	
Duguid, Hon. / L'hon. Brad (LIB)	Scarborough Centre / Scarborough-Centre	Minister of Economic Development, Employment and Infrastructure / Ministre du Développement économique, de l'Emploi et de l'Infrastructure
Fedeli, Victor (PC)	Nipissing	
Fife, Catherine (NDP)	Kitchener–Waterloo	

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Flynn, Hon. / L'hon. Kevin Daniel (LIB)	Oakville	Minister of Labour / Ministre du Travail
Forster, Cindy (NDP)	Welland	
Fraser, John (LIB)	Ottawa South / Ottawa-Sud	
French, Jennifer K. (NDP)	Oshawa	
Gates, Wayne (NDP)	Niagara Falls	
Gélinas, France (NDP)	Nickel Belt	
Gravelle, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Thunder Bay–Superior North / Thunder Bay–Superior-Nord	Minister of Northern Development and Mines / Ministre du Développement du Nord et des Mines
Gretzky, Lisa (NDP)	Windsor West / Windsor-Ouest	
Hardeman, Ernie (PC)	Oxford	
Harris, Michael (PC)	Kitchener–Conestoga	
Hatfield, Percy (NDP)	Windsor–Tecumseh	
Hillier, Randy (PC)	Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington	
Hoggarth, Ann (LIB)	Barrie	
Horwath, Andrea (NDP)	Hamilton Centre / Hamilton-Centre	Leader, Recognized Party / Chef de parti reconnu Leader, New Democratic Party of Ontario / Chef du Nouveau parti démocratique de l'Ontario
Hoskins, Hon. / L'hon. Eric (LIB)	St. Paul's	Minister of Health and Long-Term Care / Ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée
Hudak, Tim (PC)	Niagara West–Glanbrook / Niagara- Ouest–Glanbrook	
Hunter, Hon. / L'hon. Mitzie (LIB)	Scarborough–Guildwood	Associate Minister of Finance (Ontario Retirement Pension Plan) / Ministre associée des Finances (Régime de retraite de la province de l'Ontario)
Jaczek, Hon. / L'hon. Helena (LIB)	Oak Ridges–Markham	Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille Minister of Community and Social Services / Ministre des Services sociaux et communautaires
Jones, Sylvia (PC)	Dufferin–Caledon	Deputy Leader, Official Opposition / Chef adjointe de l'opposition officielle
Kiwala, Sophie (LIB)	Kingston and the Islands / Kingston et les Îles	
Kwinter, Monte (LIB)	York Centre / York-Centre	
Lalonde, Marie-France (LIB)	Ottawa–Orléans	
Leal, Hon. / L'hon. Jeff (LIB)	Peterborough	Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs / Ministre de l'Agriculture, de l'Alimentation et des Affaires rurales
Levac, Hon. / L'hon. Dave (LIB)	Brant	Speaker / Président de l'Assemblée législative
MacCharles, Hon. / L'hon. Tracy (LIB)	Pickering–Scarborough East / Pickering–Scarborough-Est	Minister of Children and Youth Services / Ministre des Services à l'enfance et à la jeunesse Minister Responsible for Women's Issues / Ministre déléguée à la Condition féminine
MacLaren, Jack (PC)	Carleton–Mississippi Mills	
MacLeod, Lisa (PC)	Nepean–Carleton	
Malhi, Harinder (LIB)	Brampton–Springdale	
Mangat, Amrit (LIB)	Mississauga–Brampton South / Mississauga–Brampton-Sud	
Mantha, Michael (NDP)	Algoma–Manitoulin	
Martins, Cristina (LIB)	Davenport	
Martow, Gila (PC)	Thornhill	
Matthews, Hon. / L'hon. Deborah (LIB)	London North Centre / London- Centre-Nord	Deputy Premier / Vice-première ministre Minister Responsible for the Poverty Reduction Strategy / Ministre responsable de la Stratégie de réduction de la pauvreté President of the Treasury Board / Présidente du Conseil du Trésor
Mauro, Hon. / L'hon. Bill (LIB)	Thunder Bay–Atikokan	Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry / Ministre des Richesses naturelles et des Forêts
McDonell, Jim (PC)	Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry	
McGarry, Kathryn (LIB)	Cambridge	
McMahon, Eleanor (LIB)	Burlington	
McMeekin, Hon. / L'hon. Ted (LIB)	Ancaster–Dundas–Flamborough– Westdale	Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / Ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement
McNaughton, Monte (PC)	Lambton–Kent–Middlesex	

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Meilleur, Hon. / L'hon. Madeleine (LIB)	Ottawa–Vanier	Attorney General / Procureure générale Minister Responsible for Francophone Affairs / Ministre déléguée aux Affaires francophones
Milczyn, Peter Z. (LIB)	Etobicoke–Lakeshore	
Miller, Norm (PC)	Parry Sound–Muskoka	
Miller, Paul (NDP)	Hamilton East–Stoney Creek / Hamilton-Est–Stoney Creek	Third Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Troisième vice-président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Moridi, Hon. / L'hon. Reza (LIB)	Richmond Hill	Minister of Research and Innovation / Ministre de la Recherche et de l'Innovation Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities / Ministre de la Formation et des Collèges et Universités
Munro, Julia (PC)	York–Simcoe	
Murray, Hon. / L'hon. Glen R. (LIB)	Toronto Centre / Toronto-Centre	Minister of the Environment and Climate Change / Ministre de l'Environnement et de l'Action en matière de changement climatique
Naidoo-Harris, Indira (LIB)	Halton	
Naqvi, Hon. / L'hon. Yasir (LIB)	Ottawa Centre / Ottawa-Centre	Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services / Ministre de la Sécurité communautaire et des Services correctionnels Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire du gouvernement
Natyshak, Taras (NDP)	Essex	
Nicholls, Rick (PC)	Chatham–Kent–Essex	Second Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Deuxième vice-président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Oraziotti, Hon. / L'hon. David (LIB)	Sault Ste. Marie	Minister of Government and Consumer Services / Ministre des Services gouvernementaux et des Services aux consommateurs
Pettapiece, Randy (PC)	Perth–Wellington	
Potts, Arthur (LIB)	Beaches–East York	
Qaadri, Shafiq (LIB)	Etobicoke North / Etobicoke-Nord	
Rinaldi, Lou (LIB)	Northumberland–Quinte West	
Sandals, Hon. / L'hon. Liz (LIB)	Guelph	Minister of Education / Ministre de l'Éducation
Sattler, Peggy (NDP)	London West / London-Ouest	
Scott, Laurie (PC)	Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock	Deputy Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjointe de l'opposition officielle
Sergio, Hon. / L'hon. Mario (LIB)	York West / York-Ouest	Minister Responsible for Seniors Affairs Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille Deputy Leader, Recognized Party / Chef adjoint du gouvernement
Singh, Jagmeet (NDP)	Bramalea–Gore–Malton	
Smith, Todd (PC)	Prince Edward–Hastings	
Sousa, Hon. / L'hon. Charles (LIB)	Mississauga South / Mississauga-Sud	Minister of Finance / Ministre des Finances
Tabuns, Peter (NDP)	Toronto–Danforth	
Takhar, Harinder S. (LIB)	Mississauga–Erindale	
Taylor, Monique (NDP)	Hamilton Mountain	
Thibeault, Glenn (LIB)	Sudbury	
Thompson, Lisa M. (PC)	Huron–Bruce	
Vanthof, John (NDP)	Timiskaming–Cochrane	
Vernile, Daiene (LIB)	Kitchener Centre / Kitchener-Centre	
Walker, Bill (PC)	Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound	
Wilson, Jim (PC)	Simcoe–Grey	Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire de l'opposition officielle
Wong, Soo (LIB)	Scarborough–Agincourt	
Wynne, Hon. / L'hon. Kathleen O. (LIB)	Don Valley West / Don Valley-Ouest	Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs / Ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales Premier / Première ministre Leader, Liberal Party of Ontario / Chef du Parti libéral de l'Ontario
Yakabuski, John (PC)	Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke	
Yurek, Jeff (PC)	Elgin–Middlesex–London	
Zimmer, Hon. / L'hon. David (LIB)	Willowdale	Minister of Aboriginal Affairs / Ministre des Affaires autochtones

**STANDING COMMITTEES OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
COMITÉS PERMANENTS DE L'ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE**

Standing Committee on Estimates / Comité permanent des budgets des dépenses

Chair / Présidente: Cheri DiNovo
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Monique Taylor
Bas Balkissoon, Chris Ballard
Grant Crack, Cheri DiNovo
Han Dong, Michael Harris
Sophie Kiwala, Todd Smith
Monique Taylor
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Eric Rennie

**Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs /
Comité permanent des finances et des affaires économiques**

Chair / Présidente: Soo Wong
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Peter Z. Milczyn
Laura Albanese, Yvan Baker
Toby Barrett, Victor Fedeli
Catherine Fife, Ann Hoggarth
Peter Z. Milczyn, Daiene Vernile
Soo Wong
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Eric Rennie

**Standing Committee on General Government / Comité
permanent des affaires gouvernementales**

Chair / Président: Grant Crack
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Joe Dickson
Mike Colle, Grant Crack
Joe Dickson, Lisa Gretzky
Ann Hoggarth, Sophie Kiwala
Jim McDonnell, Eleanor McMahon
Lisa M. Thompson
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Sylwia Przewdziecki

**Standing Committee on Government Agencies / Comité
permanent des organismes gouvernementaux**

Chair / Président: John Fraser
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Cristina Martins
Robert Bailey, Vic Dhillon
John Fraser, Wayne Gates
Marie-France Lalonde, Harinder Malhi
Cristina Martins, Randy Pettapiece
Lou Rinaldi
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Sylwia Przewdziecki

**Standing Committee on Justice Policy / Comité permanent de
la justice**

Chair / Président: Shafiq Qadri
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Lorenzo Berardinetti
Lorenzo Berardinetti, Bob Delaney
Randy Hillier, Michael Mantha
Cristina Martins, Indira Naidoo-Harris
Arthur Potts, Shafiq Qadri
Laurie Scott
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Christopher Tyrell

**Standing Committee on the Legislative Assembly / Comité
permanent de l'Assemblée législative**

Chair / Président: Monte McNaughton
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Jack MacLaren
Granville Anderson, Bas Balkissoon
Chris Ballard, Steve Clark
Jack MacLaren, Michael Mantha
Eleanor McMahon, Monte McNaughton
Soo Wong
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Trevor Day

**Standing Committee on Public Accounts / Comité permanent
des comptes publics**

Chair / Président: Ernie Hardeman
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Lisa MacLeod
Han Dong, John Fraser
Ernie Hardeman, Percy Hatfield
Lisa MacLeod, Harinder Malhi
Julia Munro, Arthur Potts
Lou Rinaldi
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Valerie Quioc Lim

**Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills / Comité
permanent des règlements et des projets de loi d'intérêt privé**

Chair / Présidente: Indira Naidoo-Harris
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Kathryn McGarry
Lorenzo Berardinetti, Jennifer K. French
Monte Kwinter, Amrit Mangat
Kathryn McGarry, Indira Naidoo-Harris
Daiene Vernile, Bill Walker
Jeff Yurek
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Christopher Tyrell

**Standing Committee on Social Policy / Comité permanent de
la politique sociale**

Chair / Président: Peter Tabuns
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Jagmeet Singh
Granville Anderson, Lorne Coe
Vic Dhillon, Amrit Mangat
Gila Martow, Kathryn McGarry
Jagmeet Singh, Peter Tabuns
Glenn Thibeault
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Katch Koch

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