



Legislative Assembly
of Ontario

First Session, 40th Parliament

Assemblée législative
de l'Ontario

Première session, 40^e législature

**Official Report
of Debates
(Hansard)**

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

Monday 23 April 2012

Lundi 23 avril 2012

Speaker
Honourable Dave Levac

Président
L'honorable Dave Levac

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Room 500, West Wing, Legislative Building
111 Wellesley Street West, Queen's Park
Toronto ON M7A 1A2
Telephone 416-325-7400; fax 416-325-7430
Published by the Legislative Assembly of Ontario



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111, rue Wellesley ouest, Queen's Park
Toronto ON M7A 1A2
Téléphone, 416-325-7400; télécopieur, 416-325-7430
Publié par l'Assemblée législative de l'Ontario

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Monday 23 April 2012

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lundi 23 avril 2012

The House met at 1030.

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

Prayers.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to rise today to recognize two great agricultural organizations that are with us today in the Legislature: Dairy Farmers of Ontario and the Ontario Federation of Agriculture. I enjoyed meeting with both of these groups this morning. I hope all members will join the dairy farmers for their reception following question period in room 228, and the OFA this afternoon in room 230. I'd like you to all welcome the two organizations here this morning.

Mr. John Vanthof: I would also like to welcome my former colleagues and still current friends from Dairy Farmers of Ontario and invite you to their hospitality at noon. Thank you.

Hon. Ted McMeekin: I'd like to take a moment to welcome Steve Jones, president and CEO of Prostate Cancer Canada, who is joined by the PCC board of directors and leaders of the PCC regional teams. As a prostate cancer survivor, I have a particular appreciation for these good people and the work they do.

I'd also like to join my colleague in welcoming the Dairy Farmers of Ontario, particularly Bill Emmott, the chair; and Peter Gould, the general manager; and of course the Ontario Federation of Agriculture, who are joining us this morning—Larry Freeman, the zone 5 director in my home riding; Bette Jean Crews, past president; Joe Dickenson, director at large; Larry Davis, zone 3 director; and Ralph Brodie, zone 1—and finally, Mr. Speaker, a good friend of mine, Matt Jelly from Hamilton, a local community activist environmentally.

Mr. Steve Clark: I want to welcome Henry Oosterhof, a dairy farmer from Leeds–Grenville. Welcome to Queen's Park.

M^{me} France Gélinas: I would like to introduce Peggy Brekveld, who made it all the way from northwestern Ontario down here with the Ontario Federation of Agriculture, as well as Ralph Brodie. Welcome to Queen's Park.

WEARING OF TIES AND SCARVES

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I believe we have unanimous consent that all members of the Legislature be per-

mitted to wear ties and scarves in honour of Prostate Cancer Canada's first Queen's Park Day.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Unanimous consent has been asked. Do I have unanimous consent? I suspect that everyone knew that everyone was wearing blue.

VISITORS

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: I'd like everyone to welcome the family of page Talin Mooradian, who is the page captain today: her mother, Tracey Mooradian; her dad, John Mooradian; her older sister and former legislative page, Ara Mooradian; and friend Cesar Razuri.

As well, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to welcome the director of the Ontario Federation of Agriculture, Keith Currie, to the House today.

Mr. Phil McNeely: We have some guests with us today representing the National Caucus of Environmental Legislators. They represent over 900 in the US and 14 here in our Legislature. Those with us from the NCEL today are J.R. Tolbert, executive director from Washington, DC; Dennis Ozment, Great Lakes program coordinator from Minnesota; and Jane Krentz, Great Lakes program coordinator and former Senator from Minnesota. I invite you all to join them for their reception this afternoon, 4:30 to 5:30.

Thank you for being here, and welcome to the Legislature.

Mr. John Yakabuski: I'd like to welcome from my riding today Debra Pretty-Straathof, who is also a director with the Ontario Federation of Agriculture, visiting Queen's Park today. Welcome.

Hon. Charles Sousa: I'd like to welcome to the Legislature today Ms. Cassandra Ruggiero. She's a vice-president of AIESEC, an international association of students helping students, and she's on her way to the UK to do just that. Welcome to Queen's Park. Mr. Speaker, she's also my goddaughter.

Mr. Monte McNaughton: I'd like to welcome Kelly Harris back to the Legislature. Kelly's from Central 1 Credit Union.

Hon. Michael Gravelle: Mr. Speaker, I'd like every member of the Legislature to welcome my big sister Susan Houghton, who is visiting in the members' west gallery. Susan is in green. Great to see you, Susan. Thank you.

L'hon. Madeleine Meilleur: Monsieur le Président, je voudrais souhaiter la bienvenue ici aujourd'hui à deux de mes commettants : M. Ronald Tourigny et son épouse, Gisèle, qui visitent Queen's Park aujourd'hui. Bienvenue.

Mr. Reza Moridi: Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to welcome His Excellency Ali Riza Guney, consul general of Turkey; Huseyin Nurgel, president of the Federation of Canadian Turkish Associations; Umit Eraysal, president of the Turkish Culture and Folklore Society; Dr. Mehmet Bor, past president of the Turkish federation; Emre Dodanli, a student; and Nalan Dodanli, a teacher. They are visiting the House today and are having a reception on the occasion of International Children's Day at the House, and every member is welcome to attend that event.

Hon. Rick Bartolucci: It is my privilege to introduce Warren Scott, district 5 vice-president, in the west gallery. He's representing the Ontario Professional Fire Fighters Association, always fighting to find a cure for cancer.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): On behalf of the member from Thunder Bay—Atikokan and page Sarah McPherson, her sister, Mary McPherson, is here this morning in the public gallery. We welcome her.

We have with us today in the Speaker's gallery the Deputy Speaker of the National Assembly of Québec, Monsieur François Ouimet. Please join me in welcoming François, a good friend of mine.

SPEAKER'S WARRANT

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I have a ruling for us. I beg to inform the House that I have laid upon the table a copy of my warrant, issued in accordance with the adoption of the House of April 19 of the report of the Standing Committee on Public Accounts respecting testimony of Dr. Chris Mazza, which was delivered in person, on my order, by the Sergeant-at-Arms on April 20, 2012.

ORAL QUESTIONS

ONTARIO BUDGET

Mr. Tim Hudak: My question is to the Deputy Premier. We believe that the core function of any good government is to spend money wisely, to get value for every single tax dollar and only buy as much government as you need, while creating the right environment for job creation in the private sector in our province. So your budget is a dramatic failure. The deficit goes up, not down. You have no plan for job creation. Basically, Minister, over the last seven months, you've been treading water with no action on the debt, no action on jobs. The Ontario PC caucus stands proudly opposed to this budget because it won't create jobs and it increases spending in the province of Ontario beyond what we can afford.

Minister, given that you've done nothing for the last seven months, will we see another plan, or is this all you have to offer?

1040

Hon. Dwight Duncan: Our plan creates jobs, it reduces the deficit, it builds on important public services—including full-day learning and keeping class sizes smaller—and it focuses on keeping our surgical wait times low, as we move back to balance in a timely and orderly fashion. We think it's the right plan. It is going to help move us forward while we protect the important gains we've made across a variety of very important public services.

We fundamentally disagree with the Leader of the Opposition. We think he's wrong. They would much rather raise class sizes, eliminate full-day learning. They have no plan to get back to balance. Even Mr. Drummond pointed out that their revenue projections were way out of whack. They want more corporate tax cuts. We want short surgical wait times. We want full-day learning. We fundamentally disagree. We want to make this Legislature work.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Tim Hudak: The Ontario PCs want to see a return to balanced budgets in the province of Ontario, paying down debt and creating jobs in our province. It's amazing, Speaker: Every time I ask the finance minister or the Premier about reducing spending, they talk about how they're going to increase spending. That's the core problem with this budget. It does not take us off the track of a \$30-billion deficit. It keeps us on the path toward tripling the debt in the province of Ontario and has a breathtaking omission of no jobs plan whatsoever.

In 2003, you campaigned and said that the debt will only go in one direction: down. But, in fact, you're now on the path to tripling the debt in the province of Ontario. This is not good enough. Take another swing at it. Will you bring forth a plan that actually reduces spending, balances the books and then pays down the debt in the province of Ontario?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: In fact, the debt-to-GDP ratio went down in the first number of years of our administration. In fact, we balanced three budgets. In fact, we inherited a deficit from the previous administration which, according to the Auditor General, was a hidden deficit. We eliminated that.

Then, like countries throughout the world, we were hit by a very difficult downturn in the economy. We chose to make important investments in infrastructure. We chose, for instance, to keep companies such as General Motors and Chrysler alive and operating here in Ontario.

It's the right time that in fact gets us back to balance. It's a strong plan, and we're going to keep building on our important gains in health care and education while we move back to balance.

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

Mr. Tim Hudak: Here's the essential problem with McGuinty Liberals' approach on this: First, they set extraordinarily weak and inadequate goals toward balancing the books or creating jobs, and then they lack the managerial confidence to even achieve those goals. They set

the bar extraordinarily low and then they fail to leap over that bar.

Time after time, this finance minister has failed to meet his targets. He's on track to what: three or four more double-digit deficits? And since the time he promised to reduce the debt—not debt to GDP; reduce the debt itself—we've seen that the debt is going to double by next year and is on track to triple by 2017. In fact, Ontario's deficit is greater than the deficits of all the other nine provinces combined. This is a dramatic failure. It's an illustration of extraordinary managerial incompetence.

Why don't you take another kick at it? Bring forward a plan that actually reduces, not increases, the deficit?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: I'll remind the Leader of the Opposition that in the election he adopted our timeline for balancing the budget.

This party and the third party had discussions throughout the weekend to make the budget work. What was the Leader of the Opposition and his caucus doing? They were nominating candidates. They have now nominated 90 candidates. They have enlisted 75 campaign managers.

I would suggest to the Leader of the Opposition that he listen to the advice of the member for Kitchener-Conestoga, who was quoted as saying, "I always say that we almost can't afford not to have an election," and he's right about that.

I think you should have spent the weekend working with this instead of getting the campaign in gear. You're in debt, you're under water, your caucus is divided—

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

Hon. Dwight Duncan: Mr. Speaker, we have a plan. We're working on it—

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

ONTARIO BUDGET

Mr. Tim Hudak: I'll let the finance minister and the Premier talk about elections until they're blue in the face. We're talking about jobs. We're talking about moving our economy forward, making Ontario a leader again. What you seem to misunderstand is an important part of attracting jobs and investment to our great province is getting spending under control and giving that confidence to investors. But under your watch, sir, as finance minister, we've had two credit downgradings. Moody's has put it on negative outlook, and the Don Drummond report that was supposed to be your silver bullet basically was put on the shelf in record time. You never talk about his recommendations anymore.

We want to go a different direction. I know they're focusing like our economy is going over Niagara Falls in a barrel, as are our finances; they're focused on building a better barrel. We want to go in the opposite direction, Speaker. We want to move upstream, create jobs, get our books under control. Why won't you?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: We have seen more than 140,000 net new jobs in the last year, more than 300,000 since the bottom of the recession in 2009, Mr. Speaker.

You know, the day the Drummond report was put out in the public, the Leader of the Opposition said you can't cherry-pick the recommendations. Then three minutes later, he said, Mr. Speaker, to keep horse racing; keep subsidizing the horse racing industry. Don't follow Drummond's recommendation on the Niagara casinos.

He did say he wants to eliminate full-day learning. He wants to raise class sizes. He wants to lengthen surgical wait times. We just fundamentally disagree with that approach.

Last fall he adopted a 2017-18 timeline, which is the one we have. The Leader of the Opposition is trying to have it both ways. The good news is that caucus's party is irrelevant in this discussion because they'd rather have an election than a meaningful discussion on the budget.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Tim Hudak: You know, I think we should probably put out a missing persons alert for Don Drummond—supposed to be your silver bullet, and then you cast it aside all together. The problem is, Speaker, that they brought forward no plan whatsoever to get back on track. In fact, they're on the path to tripling our debt. They have no jobs plan. And not only do they set weak goals, but they fail to hit even those weak goals. It's extraordinary managerial incompetence we've seen in the last nine years, the Ontario Liberal Party.

Let me give you some examples: \$1 billion wasted at eHealth, \$700 million handed over to Ornge with no oversight whatsoever, \$1 billion in welfare overpayments, and Ontario Lottery and Gaming Corp. expense scandal after expense scandal, the LHINs, the Niagara Parks Commission. The list goes on and on. Why should we trust this government even to hit its meagre goals when it continues to mess up with extraordinary managerial incompetence?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: Speaker, I'll remind the Leader of the Opposition what Patricia Croft, the former chief economist of RBC Global Asset Management, said. She said, "I disagree with Mr. Hudak. He's talking about swift action, and swift action would mean a deep recession ... swift action in terms of cutting spending even further or raising taxes. So this budget" balances "austerity with growth. That's a very tough act but I think they've done a pretty good job."

Mr. Speaker, that party is irrelevant in this discussion. They're out nominating candidates. Nobody is listening to them. They want this Legislature to work. The Leader of the Opposition is bereft of ideas other than just to recalculate all the old nostrums that were inaccurate and were rejected by Ontario last fall.

Get down to work. Make the Legislature work. I challenge you to do that.

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

Mr. Tim Hudak: When you look at page 194 and 195 of your budget, it's clear that the McGuinty government

made its choice. You want to go down the path of higher spending. You want to go down the path of increased taxes. You want to go down the path of tripling Ontario's debt. And what, you want us to drive the getaway car? We're not for that, Speaker.

We want lower taxes. We want jobs in our province. We want to get spending under control. It's the right path. If this doesn't work, will you bring back a plan that truly does? We want to see Ontario as a leader again in this great country.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: It's nice to see he's finally read the budget, Mr. Speaker. You know, he got out of the press conference—and that's why nobody is paying attention to them except their own people on Twitter when they twit to congratulate Mr. Hudak on his nomination this week.

1050

It's unfortunate that they've neutered themselves in this debate. What they lost track of is that in fact Ontarians think this is the right budget. Now, there is room for some improvement. I applaud the leader of the third party, and the New Democrats for coming forward with constructive ideas to make it work better.

They've just been absent while they're out nominating candidates, borrowing money for the buses. It's unfortunate they chose that course.

We're going to stand with this budget. We're going to make changes to make it better because the people of Ontario want this Legislature to work. The only people they're creating jobs for are poll—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Leader of the third party

ONTARIO BUDGET

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is for the Acting Premier. Would the Acting Premier agree that if the people of Ontario are going to accept this budget, they need to believe that it's fair for people like them?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: Mr. Speaker, we brought forward a budget that is fair and balanced, and we stand by that. It moves us back to balance according to the timelines that all three parties agreed to after the last election. It puts an emphasis on expenditure cuts. It does deal with revenue. We adopted the recommendation of the third party with respect to freezing the corporate tax rate, which we felt was an appropriate recommendation that made sense in the context of what's going on.

So, yes, Mr. Speaker, I agree with the leader of the third party: Fairness is important in this process and indeed in any budget. We continue to work with her and her party to make sure that it is fair. I suspect where we might differ is on what is fair and what isn't, but we look forward to continuing to work with you today.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Overwhelmingly we are hearing from people who say that that budget lacks fairness. One step we've asked the government to consider is asking very high-income earners to pay just a little bit more.

This government has hit families with unfair regressive taxes like the HST and the health tax. Why the hesitation around this simple proposal to make taxation in this province a little more fair?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: We have moved on a number of areas that the leader of the third party has suggested. We thought those were appropriate. We are looking carefully at all of the recommendations, including the tax increase that she has proposed.

I'm proud of the fact that our tax system is in fact progressive. In fact, over the last three budgets, we've made it more progressive. We created and increased the Ontario child benefit. We reduced the rate of taxation on the first bracket of income so that it is more progressive.

We do have to move back to balance, according to the timelines outlined, while respecting the principle that the leader of the third party speaks of, and that is fairness, because it's not fair to our children and grandchildren if we don't deal with this problem.

We will continue to look at her ideas. We think they've been brought forward in very good faith. I think we all—at least two parties—want to make this Legislature work.

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: In 2003, the Minister of Finance stood in this House and denounced "Tory tax boondoggles for the rich." He bragged that things have changed, reiterating that again. But now, after a decade in power, the government seems to have lost its way. Do they plan to stand with Conservatives or the people of Ontario, who are looking for a little more fairness?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: I think at the time I was referring to the generous tax cuts for the horse racing industry from the previous government. I would urge caution in going down that road because, again, we need to have some consistency in tax policy.

Again, we thank the third party for continuing the dialogue over the weekend. We accept the premise that we have to make sure this budget is fair. It has to be fair not only among people today but fair to people in the future, because of our interest and debt burden. But I think the leader of the third party is operating in good faith, and we continue to listen carefully to their suggestions.

TAXATION

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My next question is also for the Acting Premier. Fair's fair. During challenging economic times, it's even more important to share and share alike. I think Ontarians get that. The ultra-wealthy can afford to pitch in a little more to support vital services.

Donna from Cobourg advises, "The idea of having the \$500,000 [a year] wage earners pay more tax and helping out the struggling workers is great ... now stick by that."

New Democrats have been sticking by that, Speaker. Will the McGuinty Liberals?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: I think fairness is important. For instance, we thought it was fair that we proceed with

full-day learning, and I think the leader of the third party agrees with us. We thought it was fair that we proceed with small class sizes, and I believe the leader of the third party agrees with that. It is fair that we are moving forward with the Ontario child benefit, a large tax cut for people of more modest means to support their families. We agree; I think she does. Home care: We agree. In fact, we've responded as best we can to her calls. I think she also agrees that we need to protect ODSP and improve child care. We've taken steps to that as well.

We look forward to the continuing dialogue. We appreciate the opportunity to have worked over the past weekend with the third party to make this Legislature work, to get us back to balance. I applaud her for working with us instead of nominating candidates and hiring—

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: It's apparent from what the Acting Premier has to say that he would agree with me that this is not about ideology but it is about basic fairness. I think it's time for me to reiterate that if belts need to be tightened, then everybody should be feeling it.

Moira from London writes, "They need to make those who are making incredible profits pay their fair share of taxes." Will the Acting Premier ask those making half a million dollars or more a year to pitch in a little bit extra to protect the services for the rest of us?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: I'm also pleased that we have been able to take some 90,000 Ontarians off the tax rolls entirely. I am pleased that we have been able to continue to build on our anti-poverty strategy, which is an important step forward as we make progress in reducing particularly child poverty in this province. There are a variety of initiatives in the budget that build on those initiatives as we move back to balance, and we will respond with respect to this proposal in due course. But I think it's important that we continue, as a Legislature, to work together, not just in this budget but throughout the coming weeks and months, to ensure that we continue to build a stronger Ontario as we move forward together.

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Most Ontarians agree that the most fortunate among us have a role to play in making this budget fairer for their fellow citizens. John from Tecumseh writes, "Let those who have the ability to pay taxes pay more. Children need to be protected, health care needs to be enhanced." Scott from Whitby reasons, "Moderate tax increases for the people who make ... more (yes, that includes me) ... is a fairer approach." Some senior Liberals say that they would do it in a heartbeat. Will the finance minister and the Premier take their advice and make this budget fairer?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: First of all, it's pronounced "Tecumsee," but I'll say this: We discussed these matters among ourselves. We're a caucus full of bright, thoughtful people, all of whom want to move Ontario forward, and we believe that the leader of the third party does as well, and her caucus colleagues.

We look forward to arriving at a budget that is acceptable to this Legislature, that all of us can say is fair. We may not agree with all aspects of it—we will no doubt disagree on aspects of it—but I think, to her point about fairness and working together, we accept that.

I look forward to the discussions that have been going on all this past weekend continuing today. I think the people of Ontario want us here working instead of out nominating candidates, campaigning, raising money and spending money on lawn signs.

ARBITRATION

Mr. Randy Hillier: My question is to the Minister of Finance. Last week, as Ontario's PC labour critic, I tabled legislation to reform Ontario's broken arbitration system. Your hand-picked economist Don Drummond made it quite clear that if you ignore one of his recommendations, you have to put another one on the table.

Our Trust in Arbitration Act echoes one of Don Drummond's key recommendations. This bill provides a real, strong legislative framework that makes arbitrators accountable to our province's ability to pay.

1100

Minister, you've never bargained with a union that you wouldn't coddle, and you've never seen a union wage you wouldn't raise. Will you support Bill 70 to reform Ontario's broken arbitration system?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: To the Minister of Labour.

Hon. Linda Jeffrey: It's always a pleasure to hear from the honourable member from Lanark-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington. I'm not sure if the member opposite has had a chance to read through the budget, but there is a section on interest arbitration. In that section, we do address the concerns that the member's party and various municipalities have raised with us over the last few months.

The budget proposes interest arbitration provisions that provide a focused, balanced number of reforms. The reforms include accountability, transparency as well as timeliness in the interest arbitration system. At the same time, these measures would preserve the essential independence of the arbitration process. The reforms would require interest arbitration when requested by a party to provide written reasons demonstrating that they've given proper consideration to the statutory criteria.

I recommend that the member opposite read the budget on the interest arbitration—

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

Mr. Randy Hillier: More fluff and stuff from the minister.

Minister, the people of Ontario have no confidence that you or your partnership with the third party can rein in public sector wages because you always fail the people of Ontario. Our municipal partners, police service boards and small businesses have all begged you to fix an arbitration system that has increased public sector wages by 27% more than the private sector.

Minister, you asked for ideas, and we've provided them. The Ontario PCs have put forward a strong, mandatory wage freeze. We've tabled even stronger legislation to restore trust in our broken arbitration system.

Minister, you have never been able to look Don Drummond straight in the eye. Will the minister of big debts and short change support our strong legislation to reform Ontario's—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I offer a caution: The member referred to the minister in a way that is not appropriate or understood to be convention. I remind all members, please, either their riding or their ministry. Thank you.

Minister of Labour.

Hon. Linda Jeffrey: Thank you, Speaker. As I stated in my first answer, our government's budget includes an item on interest arbitration provisions that provide a focused and balanced approach.

We're going to increase accountability. We're going to increase transparency. We're going to increase timeliness of the interest arbitration system. These are all things that I know the party opposite has been asking for, and yet you're going to vote against a budget and force Ontarians into an election that nobody wants. Ontarians don't want that unnecessary election and expensive process that puts our economy at risk.

I want to say to the member opposite, if you really want to see changes to the interest arbitration system, why not support the budget and spare Ontarians the unnecessary expense of an election?

Mr. Speaker, we support an impartial system that requires participation of both parties.

I recommend the member opposite try to put his interests aside, think of Ontarians and support the budget.

JOB CREATION

Mr. Taras Natyshak: My question is to the Acting Premier. It's clear the budget lacks a plan for people looking for work in this province. Minister, as you know, the unemployment rate in communities like Windsor-Tecumseh is in double digits, and nearly 25,000 people are looking for work in London.

New Democrats have proposed a tax credit that rewards companies that create jobs. Will the Acting Premier make the budget fairer for people and move forward with our job creation proposal?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: To the Minister of Economic Development and Trade.

Hon. Brad Duguid: I don't know if the member was at committee last week, but I know his colleagues who were there supported our initiatives to create jobs in southwestern Ontario by voting in favour of the southwest Ontario development fund. This Legislature will have an opportunity to vote for that very bill; something that's worked very well in eastern Ontario. Unfortunately, just like on the budget, the PC Party does not appear to be supporting jobs for southwestern Ontario.

We welcome support from the NDP, but we call on our colleagues across the aisle here to support jobs in southwestern Ontario, support investments in southwestern Ontario, by supporting this very important piece of legislation that will create exactly what the member is asking us to create today.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Modelled after a plan by the Obama administration, our job creator tax credit would create more than 50,000 jobs.

It's not just that there isn't a plan to create jobs in this budget. Decisions like terminating the horse racing revenue-sharing program without any consultation will take a toll on jobs in rural Ontario. We propose that the government work with the horse racing industry with the goal of stabilizing that sector. Will we see a plan to retain jobs in rural Ontario today from the government?

Hon. Brad Duguid: I hear what the member is saying, but the people in southwestern Ontario want their southwestern Ontario development fund. The people in eastern Ontario want their eastern Ontario development fund. What they don't want is an unnecessary election that's going to stop us from being able to deliver jobs in southwestern Ontario, in eastern Ontario.

Last month alone, 46,000 net jobs were created in this province. The economy is going in the right direction. The last thing we want now, Mr. Speaker, is an unnecessary election that's going to make things unstable and slow down the economic growth that we're achieving.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Prince Edward-Hastings, come to order.

Hon. Brad Duguid: Mr. Speaker, we look to the NDP in the next few days to show leadership and pass the budget that's going to reduce the deficit and is going to create jobs in southwestern Ontario, eastern Ontario and the entire province.

ONTARIO PUBLIC SERVICE

Ms. Tracy MacCharles: My question is to the Minister of Government Services. Tomorrow we vote on our government's strong budget to help Ontario recover from the global recession and get back to balance. Ontario's budget for 2012-13 proposes extending the existing salary freeze for MPPs for another two years, for a total of five years. My constituents of Pickering-Scarborough East want all MPPs to show leadership on this and offer solutions in the best interests of Ontarians. I speak for all of my colleagues on this side of the House when I say that we are in public service because we want to make a difference in our communities and create a better Ontario for future generations. Speaker, could the minister please tell this House about the Premier's proposal?

Hon. Harinder S. Takhar: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the member from Pickering-Scarborough East for asking this question. She is absolutely correct: These are tough economic times and in these tough economic times we are asking all of our partners, including the MPPs, to

do their part, but at the same time protect the priorities that are important to Ontarians, like health, education and creating jobs. That's why it's important for us all to work together to resolve the issues that we are facing right now. It's important that we continue to lead by example, so we are asking all MPPs to take two years of additional freeze in their salaries. That would be a total of five. It's not the easy thing to do, but it's the right thing to do and it shows leadership.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Tracy MacCharles: Ontario has elected us to protect public services, eliminate the deficit and work together for all Ontarians. I was very troubled to learn in the National Post last week that the PC member from Nipissing complained that his taxpayer-funded \$116,550 salary is too low.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Member, I am going to offer this again generically. Government policy, please. Redirect your question, please.

Ms. Tracy MacCharles: Speaker, I'm talking about the MPP—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I did not stand for others to start. Redirect your question, please.

Ms. Tracy MacCharles: Thank you, Speaker. We know candidates run for different reasons. I can tell you, I didn't run for a paycheque. Mr. Speaker, I am here for Pickering–Scarborough East to help deliver quality services for all Ontarians, not because of the size of the paycheque. This is about leadership. We are asking our public sector partners to do their part, yet some opposition members appear to have a problem with how much we all make. Could the minister please remind all members that a five-year MPP salary freeze as proposed in the budget is how we are leading by example to serve the people of Ontario?

Hon. Harinder S. Takhar: I want to thank the member for asking the question again. I have been in this Legislature for nine years and I am very impressed with the quality of the people in this Legislature.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Order.

1110

Hon. Harinder S. Takhar: We bring different perspectives. We come from different backgrounds. That's what enriches the experience in this Legislature.

Most of us got into the Legislature to make a difference and serve Ontarians. Providing leadership at this point of time to balance our budget is important. The member should be focusing on how we can address the issue of the deficit, how we can address our priorities, rather than talking about the salary at this point of time. So, Mr. Speaker, I will urge him that he knew exactly what the salary was before he got into the Legislature, and not talk about—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Now, I am going to make a statement here. These kinds of questions—and I have heard them from all sides—are

leading us to racing to the bottom. I'd rather us race to the top.

New question.

AIR AMBULANCE SERVICE

Mr. Toby Barrett: To the Deputy Premier: Thursday I asked you about the involvement of Don Guy, Dalton McGuinty's former chief of staff and election guru: about Don Guy's involvement in the ever-growing Ornge scandal. Friday, I received an intimidating letter from Don Guy's lawyer, insinuating legal action. I see this as a threat, an attempt to force my silence into the questioning of those involved in this scandal that plagues your government.

Deputy Premier, did anyone on the Premier's staff or anyone on your caucus direct or authorize Don Guy to intimidate an elected member of this Legislature?

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

Hon. Dwight Duncan: To the Minister of Community and Social Services.

Hon. John Milloy: I think it's about time that members on the opposition benches allow the committee to do its work. Mr. Guy, Don Guy, has been asked by the committee to appear in front of them. My understanding is that he has indicated a willingness to appear in front of the committee. I understand the clerk will be making arrangements for a number of witnesses to go forward. There is a list of witnesses. There are opportunities for opposition members and government members alike to ask questions of people and to get to the bottom of it.

Last week, I think the Deputy Premier spoke about an individual by the name of Kelly Mitchell, a very prominent member of the opposite member's party, an individual who we look forward to questioning. Again, there was a—

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

Mr. Toby Barrett: Thank you, Speaker. I think all concerned—we want to deal with this. I know the Premier to be an honourable man, so I'm sure he will take the opportunity to set the record straight and provide critical information.

My question, to whoever wants to answer: Can the Deputy Premier tell this House of any and all involvement of Don Guy in the Ornge file, in any way, any shape or form, while he served as chief of staff? Secondly, will you agree to table all emails and all documents pertaining to Don Guy's involvement on the Ornge file?

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Government House leader?

Hon. James J. Bradley: That's why we have a committee.

Hon. John Milloy: Exactly. As my friend the Minister of the Environment points out, that's why we have standing committees of this Legislature. That's why we have the public accounts committee, which is right now looking into the Ornge situation. They have requested that Mr. Guy come before the committee. It's my under-

standing he has spoken of his willingness to appear and they are right now trying to schedule him to come forward.

Last week, a motion was passed in this House to call Kelly Mitchell before the committee.

Interjection: Looking forward to that.

Hon. John Milloy: I think most people, as my friend behind me says, are looking forward to hearing from him—a very, very prominent Conservative who apparently was paid \$400,000 by Ornge in order to lobby and schmooze with prominent members of the Progressive Conservative Party. I think we're looking forward to him answering questions at the committee—

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

HOSPITAL FUNDING

M^{me} France Gélinas: Ma question est pour le premier ministre par intérim. The vast majority of community hospitals are facing cutbacks, and it's starting to have an effect. Niagara hospitals have to cut beds across the NHS because of a funding freeze delivered in this government's budget. At Health Sciences North in Sudbury, patients are concerned that the care they need will simply not be accessible to them.

Will the Acting Premier put local health care before millionaires?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: To the Minister of Health.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I want to take this opportunity to actually say thank you to the people who work in our hospitals: our front-line workers, our nurses, our doctors, our environmental services staff; all of the people who make Ontario's hospitals amongst the best in the world.

We have invested enormously in hospitals in the eight years that we have been in government. This year, we made a very strategic decision to invest in home care. We know there are too many people who are in hospital beds who do not need to be there, who do not want to be there, who could go home if the supports at home were available.

We have made a strategic decision. We will continue to increase funding for hospitals, but the bulk of our new investments are in the home and community sector. I think that's where they need to be.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

M^{me} France Gélinas: There are more rural, northern and community hospitals facing the budget crunch. Élisabeth Bruyère health centre in eastern Ontario is looking at cutting rehab and palliative care beds, as well as the staff that goes with them.

Our modest tax increase for those who have taxable incomes of over half a million dollars would help make sure that those health care services remain in those communities. It is reasonable. It is responsible. It's the right thing to do.

Will the Acting Premier do the right thing and put front-line health care over millionaires?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Our action plan is very clear and very deliberate. We need to invest more in community care, more in home care. We have a finite amount of money that we can spend. Our decision to focus on home care and community care is the right decision. It is supported by such experts as Dr. Zalan in Sudbury. I know the member opposite is familiar with the work he is doing.

I can tell you that across the province, I have had very strong support for the initiatives in our action plan. We can do better, and I'm leading that change.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): New question. Member from Guelph.

ASSISTANCE TO FARMERS

Mrs. Liz Sandals: Thank you, Speaker. My question, through you, is to the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs. I have recently read an open letter sent to you by the member for Oxford with regard to the Risk Management Program. Apparently, he is somewhat confused about the program.

I have been receiving very positive reaction to the budget from the agriculture stakeholder community because they are pleased about the continuation of the program for the 2012 crop year and the work that you have begun with stakeholders on a new iteration of the program for the 2013 crop year.

However, the letter alleges that farmers are confused about when changes to the program would take effect. Minister, could you please clear up the member for Oxford's confusion? Is the RMP capped for the 2012 crop year?

Hon. Ted McMeekin: I want to thank the member for the question. It's certainly a very important question. I want to be perfectly clear in answering the question, as I have been with farmers and in discussions with my good friend the member from Oxford on this very point.

For the 2012 program year, the 2012 crop year, the program remains the same. Farmers are still enrolled in the demand-driven program they signed up for.

For the 2013 program year, as we announced in the budget, we are working with farmers to revise and enhance the program to bring greater predictability to both farmers and the government.

Here's what Dan Darling, president of the Ontario Cattlemen's Association, said: "Farmers have been assured that the 2012 year will be funded and administered as presented without a cap on funding."

Mrs. Liz Sandals: Thank you, Minister. I know that farmers across Ontario will appreciate having you set the record straight.

The letter also quotes several farm organizations on whether they correctly understood the budget and your discussions with them about the program.

Minister, our government worked extensively with farmers to implement the Risk Management Program. So it's important that farmers have a clear understanding of the intent of the government for RMP. Minister, can you

share with this House any of the reaction that you've heard from the agriculture stakeholders you've been working with on this program?

1120

Mr. Ted McMeekin: Thanks again for that question. Mr. Speaker, Lorne Small, the president of the Christian farmers organization said, "The organization is satisfied with the government's message today that the made-in-Ontario Risk Management Program will be continued...."

The Grain Farmers of Ontario said this: "For the 2012 program year, our organization has been assured that the existing guidelines will remain in place and RMP will not be capped. The details of the 2013 program year will be part of an ongoing discussion...."

Mr. Speaker, it's clear that our farmers understand, and it's also clear that they don't want to be confused, knowingly or unknowingly. I think it would be fair to say that the last thing they want is to see this program put at risk with an early and unnecessary election.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Mrs. Jane McKenna: Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. Last week, work in my Burlington and Toronto offices ground to a halt as a result of a malicious, cowardly smear campaign, one that the Premier and Minister of Health unleashed on the people of my riding. Angry, confused and shocked Burlingtonians were victims of Liberals' automated robo-calls, calls that falsely linked expansions of Joseph Brant hospital with the 2012 budget.

The Minister of Health took an oath to promote and protect the well-being of all Ontarians. That she would engage in such behaviour is truly disappointing. Speaker, will the Minister of Health confirm that she and the Premier put the fortunes of the Liberal Party above the health of the citizens of Burlington?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: The member opposite, I believe, is aware that on page 40 of the budget, Speaker, it says, "The government will continue its investments in more than 30 new major hospital" capital "projects, in addition to the 25 major"—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I repeat my previous comment, and that is that I would rather us race to the top than race to the bottom. Please come to order.

Minister.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Thank you, Speaker. So I quote from the budget, page 40: "The government will continue its investments in more than 30 new major hospital" capital "projects, in addition to the 25 major projects currently under construction." The Burlington hospital, Joe Brant hospital, is one of those 30 major capital expansions.

Speaker, I know it's difficult for the member opposite to have to have to choose between her loyalty to her party and her loyalty to her community, but I think this hospital expansion is important in the community.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mrs. Jane McKenna: Speaker, through you to the Minister of Health, my, my, you are rather liberal with the truth, aren't you? This budget does nothing—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I would ask the member to withdraw that.

Mrs. Jane McKenna: I withdraw.

This budget does nothing to repair the economy. It does nothing to correct your carefree spending. Hour by hour, you are increasing spending and deepening our debt. That is the real threat to projects like the Joseph Brant expansion.

Minister, you are a walking case of political opportunism and bad judgment. You were too busy campaigning to read the auditor's report on Ornge. You've endorsed dirty tricks and deceitful robo-calls. And you have the nerve to sit there with a self-righteous smirk on your face.

Are you so out of touch with reality that you thought you could get away with not—

Interjections.

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

Interjections.

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

Minister.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I'm disappointed that the member opposite is stooping to such personal attacks. But I do have to say that the member opposite, even in her question, illustrated the conflict that I'm hearing across the way. They're saying, "Spend more on hospitals," but they're saying, "You're spending too much." They can't have it both ways. They need to choose a lane.

The member opposite knows that if this budget does not pass, we will be forced into an unnecessary and expensive election. The member opposite also knows that this government remains firmly committed to the expansion at Joe Brant hospital. We are on track. We do not want to jeopardize that progress by an unnecessary and expensive election.

JOB CREATION

Ms. Sarah Campbell: My question is to the Acting Premier. Families in northwestern Ontario are concerned about a Liberal budget that has let them down on jobs. There is no plan to create jobs in our communities and no commitment to invest in infrastructure that's needed in the Ring of Fire. Making things worse, cuts to tourism information centres will make it harder for already struggling tourism outfitters to grow their small businesses. Will we see the government move on our proposals to make the budget better for people, with real action on job creation?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: To the Minister of Northern Development and Mines.

Hon. Rick Bartolucci: Speaker, I am very, very proud of this government and this government's budget. Their commitment to northern Ontario is voluminous,

when you think about the opportunity that this budget creates for northern Ontario.

Not only do we continue our investment in the northern Ontario heritage fund—that's to the tune of \$100 million—a fund that has created, to date, 18,000 jobs and co-op placements; a fund that has invested in 4,300 projects; that has leveraged more than \$2.4 billion to northern Ontario. This government has a commitment to northern Ontario that far surpasses the commitment of the two opposition parties when they were in government, when they stripped opportunity for northern Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Sarah Campbell: The truth is, the facts tell a different story. Given the choice, this government won't even hire Ontario workers. We've recently found out that people working for Ontario's Ministry of Natural Resources aren't based in northwestern Ontario. They're not even based in southern Ontario. They're not even based in Canada. No, the MNR has taken call centre jobs that should be in Ontario and put them in Tennessee—this, on top of the McGuinty government's plan to further cut MNR jobs as announced in their budget.

If the Ontario government won't even employ people living in Ontario, how does it expect anyone else to employ Ontario residents? Will we see a proposal today from this government that takes action on jobs in northwestern Ontario?

Hon. Rick Bartolucci: I want to follow up on the northern Ontario heritage fund for a second, because the member's riding of Kenora–Rainy River has had approval of 384 projects. We've approved \$90,438,000, which has leveraged \$239,897,000 and has created 2,290 jobs in Kenora–Rainy River alone.

This budget protects the 170,000 jobs in northern Ontario and commits \$618 million to improving northern highways. Now, I say that's commitment. Are you going to support that tomorrow?

1130

SKILLS TRAINING

Ms. Dipika Damerla: My question is to the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities. We've been talking a lot about making sure that our students are ready for the 21st-century economy by making sure that they get affordable, high-quality post-secondary education, and we have done a great job on that, including our 30% tuition grant, which is making it more affordable. The proof is in the pudding because today, Ontario has among the highest rates of graduation when it comes to post-secondary education in the OECD countries.

We need to also talk about people who are already in the workforce and facing layoff. What are we going to do to help them? They've got a lot of skills, a lot of work experience and transferable skills. Can the minister tell us what we are doing to help these people transition?

Hon. Glen R. Murray: The member for Mississauga East–Cooksville is quite correct: We're going through a very challenging time. My friend the member from Essex

raised this same point earlier. When we went through a global recession, there was a fundamental change in our economy. We have lost some jobs, as everyone else in the western economy knows, and the jobs that have been created, which are now over 350,000—70% of those require a university or college education.

Our Second Career program has been aimed at trying to ensure that people who lost lower-skill jobs in the economy can get into the new higher-skill jobs within the economy. We have now put over 53,000 Ontarians who lost their jobs into high-skill jobs as a result of this program.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Dipika Damerla: Thank you, Minister. My supplementary is: It's important that we continue to train our workers who are leaving one industry to be matched immediately with employers in another industry. But what I'd like to know is: What are we doing to ensure that Ontarians are not only entering but completing Second Career programs and then landing good jobs?

Hon. Glen R. Murray: Thank you very much. In fact, 95% of the clients complete their skills-training program and about 75% are getting a job within six months, which is quite extraordinary.

The commitment of this government across the province has been quite extraordinary. The UOIT, which my friends opposite in the Durham region would know, has seen its budget increase under this government 386%. Part of the reason for that is that many of our colleges and universities have taken the spirit of this program and dramatically increased it.

If you want to work at GM or Chrysler, with about 9,000 jobs that have been created in that area alone, you now need a background in robotics or software development. Our colleges and universities, which have an over 86% placement—these jobs now in the new economy, whether they're apprenticeship, trades or college-based, require that higher education.

Families who have lost their jobs get \$28,000 per family throughout their training so that they don't end up in further poverty.

GASOLINE PRICES

Mr. Steve Clark: My question is for the Minister of Consumer Services. Minister, three gasoline retailers in my area recently entered guilty pleas for price-fixing charges. I commend the federal Competition Bureau for sticking up for motorists feeling the pain at the pump, but my constituents think something is missing. They think Ontario's consumer services ministry is asleep at the switch.

People like Steve Connors of Kemptonville are writing me to ask me a simple question. Other than watching the Premier drive up the price of gas with tax grabs, what is your ministry doing to protect consumers from being gouged?

Hon. Margaret R. Best: It is certainly a pleasure for me to rise in this Ontario Legislature to address issues

relating to consumer protection. This government is committed to protecting Ontario's consumers, and we certainly look to the people on the opposite side to stand up for Ontarians. They don't even want to stand up for the budget. They don't even care about Ontarians. They have no interest whatsoever in the budget, Mr. Speaker, so it behooves me that these people could get up and ask a question about consumer protection when they don't even care about Ontarians. They didn't even read the budget before they decided that they weren't going to support it. So, Mr. Speaker—

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

Mr. Steve Clark: I appreciate it, Minister. This is a very touchy subject and difficult for you to answer. After all, it was your government who hit motorists with an 8% overnight increase thanks to the hated HST. No one knows consumer gouging like the McGuinty government.

Speaker, the Brockville Recorder and Times recently conducted a poll about gas prices, and 97% of respondents thought there was something fishy when it comes to how they fluctuate. So I ask you, Minister: Are you with the 97%, or is your head stuck in the sand with the 3% who think everything is okay?

Hon. Margaret R. Best: First of all, Mr. Speaker, let me say that the member opposite should realize that an unnecessary election would kill the proposed legislation to crack down on cellphone issues and contract issues. I want to say, our government is committed to addressing issues relating to consumer protection, and we are indeed a strong ally of consumer—

Interjection.

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

Hon. Margaret R. Best: Mr. Speaker, the member opposite raises an issue that the federal government needs to address as well. We have made improvements in protection for consumers when they buy cars, make funeral arrangements, when they book their trips, and in various other aspects of consumer protection. We continue to work with our consumers in the province of Ontario to raise awareness, because we want smart consumers—

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

ONTARIO NORTHLAND TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION

Mr. Gilles Bisson: My question is to the Deputy Premier. Your decisions to divest the Ontario Northland commission and shut down the rail line is going to put shippers along the route at risk. Companies like Lecours Lumber, Columbia Forest Products, Tembec in Hearst, Cochrane and other places, Agrium out of Opasatika, and Xstrata out of Timmins rely on the Ontario Northland as a cheap and efficient way of moving their goods. By shutting down the Ontario Northland, you're going to force them to go to road, which is going to cost a lot

more money. Why are you putting the jobs in these plants at risk yet again in northern Ontario?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: To the Minister of Northern Development and Mines.

Hon. Rick Bartolucci: Speaker, it's very, very important that everyone understands that the goal of this government is to ensure that we have a modern, effective, efficient transportation system in place, not only for today but for tomorrow. I think everyone in this House understands that we cannot sustain a \$100-million subsidy to the ONTC. So the government took the very, very difficult action it took when it decided that we will divest the ONTC. That doesn't mean that we are going to have an inferior system in place. We are very, very confident as we move forward that we are going to have a much more superior system of transportation in place. That's our goal; that's what we work towards.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: The problem is, nobody has confidence in this government when it comes to anything you've done in northern Ontario. I think the reality of this government is that you have the Midas touch when it comes to anything you touch.

I have a very simple question for you. People in northern Ontario are hopping mad at what this government has not done when it comes to forestry and other industries. You're now about to shut down the Ontario Northland, and it's creating a situation in northern Ontario where people are actually talking about seceding from this province. Is this a legacy that you want to leave in northern Ontario when it comes to the record of your government—more northern alienation?

Hon. Rick Bartolucci: Speaker, I'd like to read a letter. The letter is from Mike from North Bay, and he writes: "The NDP Was No Friend to Ontario Northland." He goes on to say, "When in power, the Ontario NDP reduced bus service from Timmins to Chapleau and Wawa, docked the new ferry in Tobermory, cut norOntair service from 21 to six communities and sold off Star Transfer, the trucking firm of the ONTC," putting those people out of work immediately.

Our plan for the ONTC is to divest the assets, not foreclose those assets, as the NDP did. We will divest to a system of transportation that will be in place, that will be sustainable, affordable, efficient and effective, not only for today but for tomorrow.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): There are no deferred votes. This House stands recessed until 1 p.m. this afternoon.

The House recessed from 1140 to 1300.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Introduction of guests? The member from Nipissing.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Speaker, I stand on a point of order. Earlier today in question period, the member from Pickering-Scarborough East made a statement about an article in the National Post, to which I was attributed a comment. Speaker, I did not ever say that comment. It is untrue—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Okay. While that could be made—it's not a point of order because, unfor-

tunately or fortunately, depending on one's perspective, only a member can correct their own record.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Speaker, can I rise again?

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Yes, please do.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: How can I ask her to correct the record? As a new member, I would be interested to know that.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I actually figured that one out. I wanted to check with the Clerk just to make sure.

The member can ask the member, and if the member chooses to speak to the member about that, you are absolutely free to do so.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: It gives me great pleasure, and I ask the entire House to welcome my guests. I have Gary Sran here, Gagan Kaur, Harjiwan Singh, Baldeep Singh, Harman Singh, Harbaljeet Singh and my brother Gurratan Singh. You can all stand.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): We always welcome our guests. Thank you for being here.

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: Mr. Speaker, I don't believe that they've arrived yet. We're expecting a grade 5 class from Innerkip public school to join us here in the Legislature today. I'd like to welcome them to the Legislature along with the teachers and the parents who are here supervising today and wish them all a good and happy day here, an educational day here at Queen's Park.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. We do welcome the guests.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

ONTARIO FARMERS

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: Today, we have two great agricultural organizations with us here at Queen's Park: the Ontario Federation of Agriculture and the Dairy Farmers of Ontario.

Our farmers contribute greatly to our province's economy. In 2009, Ontario farm outputs contributed \$22 billion in gross economic stimulus. More than 80,000 Ontarians make this their living on farms, and 718,000 Ontarians work in the agri-food sector.

Our farmers work hard and they deserve our support, but there are a number of government policies that hurt our agriculture industry. Our farmers are struggling with too much red tape. Government needs to consult with farmers before they introduce legislation that impacts them. We need to find real solutions when the Endangered Species Act causes problems—such as the bobolink—not just postpone the problem; and to challenges like the OSPCA having huge powers on farms and over farm animal welfare without having the proper training and accountability.

We've heard from the OFA and other organizations that this government's decision to end the slots-at-race-tracks partnership will cost tens of thousands of jobs on farms and in our agri-businesses. This afternoon, Tim Hudak and I are looking forward to meeting with these organizations to discuss their challenges and priorities.

We were pleased to work with farmers for years to get a risk management program. Farmers, agricultural organizations and the PC caucus asked for an insurance program that farmers could depend on. We will continue to work with them during the review to make sure that farmers have a program that works.

I want to thank both organizations for coming to Queen's Park to update us today.

TRISTAN EMIRY

Mr. Michael Mantha: I am honoured for the opportunity to recognize a young man from Algoma-Manitoulin, Tristan Emiry, who has won the prestigious Loran Award.

The Loran Award is the largest undergraduate merit scholarship in Canada. Tristan will receive up to \$80,000 to pursue his post-secondary studies when he graduates from Espanola High School this June. The Loran Award will include four years of funding and a comprehensive enrichment and mentoring program.

I am proud that one of my constituents is one of the 30 students from across Canada to receive this award. Tristan has been an active student as the Prime Minister of the student Parliament for the past two years, as well as Deputy Prime Minister in grade 10.

Tristan spearheaded the Spread the Net campaign in his high school with impressive results, leading to their school being featured on the Rick Mercer Report as the top fund-raising high school in Canada. This year, the school, with Tristan's leadership, tripled its donation, raising over \$31,000 for bed nets to help protect children from malaria in Africa. Once again on the Mercer Report a few weeks ago, Tristan was named the youth ambassador for Spread the Net.

Tristan plans to study either economics at McGill University or agriculture economics at Guelph. Whichever program he chooses, they will be fortunate to have him.

Tristan has earned the respect and admiration of many of his school and community members, and I want to pass along my congratulations and best wishes for him in his future.

ONTARIO FARMERS

Mr. Jeff Leal: I rise today to recognize the Dairy Farmers of Ontario and the members who are participating in their visit to Queen's Park today.

The DFO works to ensure a consistent supply of milk is available to provide high-quality dairy products to consumers at reasonable prices while ensuring that producers receive a fair return. I think all members of this

House can truly be proud of the work that the Dairy Farmers of Ontario do so that Ontarians can enjoy delicious, locally produced dairy products.

I'd also like to recognize the Ontario Federation of Agriculture and their members who are visiting the Legislature today as well. The OFA is Ontario's largest general farm organization. We on this side of the House appreciated the contributions that the OFA made in developing the risk management and the self-directed risk management program. I'm certain all members of this House will take this opportunity to thank the OFA and their members for providing some of the good things that grow in Ontari-ari-ari-o.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I'm glad you didn't sing it.

NATIONAL ORGAN AND TISSUE DONOR AWARENESS WEEK

Mr. Norm Miller: I rise today to speak to a very important issue and an event of which we should all be aware. This week is National Organ Donor Week. One individual can save up to eight lives through organ donation and enhance the lives of 75 more through tissue donation.

Unfortunately, more than 4,000 Canadians are waiting for an organ transplant to save their lives and, in 2010, nearly 230 Canadians died while waiting for a transplant. For every million Canadians, 16.3 donate organs. Clearly, there is much more we can do.

It begins with awareness. The Torch of Life relay organized by the Step by Step Organ Transplant Association is currently crossing the province, encouraging Ontarians to become donors and save lives. In fact, today, and for the rest of the week, they are passing through the riding of Parry Sound–Muskoka.

Last year, along with the members for Newmarket–Aurora and Durham, I took on a challenge to raise the number of registered organ and tissue donors in my riding. The numbers in each of our ridings have since increased by 3%. I note there's now a new website that rates the towns, and the town of Parry Sound comes in at 48% as compared to a provincial average of 21%.

I encourage each of my colleagues here to take on a similar challenge, to visit beadonor.ca and educate themselves and others, register their consent to become an organ donor and help bring about the day where no Canadians die while waiting for a transplant.

BRAD GIBB

Mr. Taras Natyshak: I rise today to acknowledge an achievement and a prestigious award that was won by a member of my community, a native of Amherstburg. Brad Gibb was named the program director of the year for a medium-sized market by the Canadian Music and Broadcasting Industry.

The list of winners at the recent Canadian Music and Broadcast Industry Awards includes Mr. Gibb, who's 35

years old, and won for the program director of the year for medium-sized markets and works at FM-96 in London. Gibb is the son of Sharon and Carl Gibb and got his start while growing up in Amherstburg.

The awards ceremony was held March 22 at the Fairmont Royal York in Toronto and resulted in the biggest award that Gibb has won in his career to date. He said it was a reflection of the people whom he works with and it's a special award as he was recognized for doing something that he loves to do.

A number of factors are considered in this award, including ratings and the commitment to developing Canadian talent, including on-air talent as well as Canadian musicians. Having a good relationship with members of the Canadian music industry is also a component.

Mr. Gibb spent 14 years working in the radio industry but traces his roots back to the days of General Amherst High School, where he and Alex Storino would do morning announcements, similar to morning show radio hosts.

Jack Sorenson, a teacher at General Amherst, took them to the Windsor Press Club one day, where they met people employed in the radio industry, and things took off from there.

Mr. Speaker, I congratulate them on this achievement and wish Mr. Gibb much success in his career going forward.

1310

PROSTATE CANCER

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: Viewers might be aware that all members today are wearing the same tie or the same scarf, and that is because today is Prostate Cancer Awareness Day. During their lifetime, one in seven Canadian men will develop prostate cancer, and virtually all of us here in this House know someone who has had to confront this disease.

In recent years, though, we've made progress. After seeing a rise in the 1980s and 1990s, the rate of prostate cancer mortality fell in Ontario, and by 2009, it reached its lowest level in 25 years. It just proves that investments in our health care system do make a difference.

Our government has shown leadership on this issue. In 2008, we expanded OHIP to provide publicly insured PSA tests for eligible patients at a community lab. To date, the total volume of PSA tests for 2011-12 is over 400,000. Yet it's still a massive challenge. According to the Canadian Cancer Society, prostate cancer remains the most frequently diagnosed cancer in our entire province. Sadly, Speaker, last year an estimated 1,550 men died of this disease.

Even now, few men and their families know about the risks of developing prostate cancer. That's one of the reasons for today, Speaker, Prostate Cancer Awareness Day: to educate about the risks and remember those who have had to fight prostate cancer, and to remind us all that there's a lot more work to be done.

BUTTER TART TRAIL

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: Any visit to Wellington county wouldn't be complete without a tasty treat: the great Canadian butter tart. The township of Wellington North created a tourism sensation when, five years ago, it created the Butter Tart Trail. Publications including the Toronto Star and Canadian Living magazine have featured the Butter Tart Trail.

Winding through Wellington North, the trail includes stops at various antique shops, farm markets, artisan studios and, of course, bakeries that serve butter tarts. Some favourites include the butter tart served with a scoop of ice cream and the official goat butter tart, made with real goat milk butter. It's not just delicious, but it's also a community-based economic development that has proven to be very effective.

The Butter Tart Trail comes from the idea that to promote local economic development, you need to build on existing community strength and capitalize on your assets. That's what happened in Wellington North, and we've seen that community leadership goes a long way.

I want to commend the council and staff of Wellington North, the tourism committee and all our local businesses that take part in the Butter Tart Trail. Their success is a clear sign that the spirit of enterprise is alive and well in Perth-Wellington. For that and for contributing so much to our communities, they should be congratulated.

I want to encourage all MPPs to pick up a copy of the map of the trail—I have it in my Queen's Park office—and I hope you'll join me as we “simply explore” the Butter Tart Trail.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I want to thank the member for making me drool. I appreciate that very much.

The member for Etobicoke North.

IMMIGRATION POLICY

Mr. Shafiq Qaadri: Speaker, I'd like to inform you, and through you the people of Ontario and members of this chamber, of a social engineering and ethnic selection experiment that I believe is currently being exacted—possibly perpetrated—against the people of Ontario, as well as Canadians in general, by the federal Department of Citizenship and Immigration.

As you'll be aware, Speaker, hundreds of thousands of immigrants who in good faith have applied for the past eight years, up till 2008, have simply been told that their applications have been dismissed. They are to reapply under a new social engineering experiment. Their applications have been discarded, cleansed and thrown out. As an example, that leads to the doubling and tripling of time for family unification, spousal reunification.

Who will they accept? Well, Speaker, I would like to put on notice that my Canada includes the world, and as an example, the federal Department of Citizenship and Immigration is reducing the number of centres that are offering services in Hindi, Urdu, Punjabi, Farsi, Tamil

and Arabic. They're even reducing the number of centres that offer services in French.

As was said today in the Toronto Star, one immigrant who applied says that we've lost “our youth, our life and our dreams.”

This is an Americanization, an Albertanization, a Wildrose-ing of Canada, and I sincerely hope, Speaker, that this far-right Republican Tea Party mentality does not become Canada's mentality.

MANUFACTURING JOBS

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: I rise today to share with the House the concerns of the Huron Manufacturing Association. They wrote to me about their concern about the loss of manufacturing jobs in our riding. They're concerned that manufacturing will not survive this Liberal government's unaffordable and unsustainable energy policies. Speaker, in their note to me they said, “We have to fight the McGuinty government because they are going to kill manufacturing as we know it in the county today.” They also refer to an article from the magazine Canadian Manufacturing that says that, according to the Fraser Institute, “Renewable energy could cost Ontario electricity users an extra \$18 billion over 20 years.”

Speaker, the Fraser Institute estimates that Ontario consumers will pay \$285 million more annually for residential electricity and Canada could lose an additional 41,000 full-time-equivalent jobs over a 20-year period because of the McGuinty government's subsidization of renewable energy.

The Fraser Institute said, “If other governments choose to emulate Ontario's energy policies, they too will see higher electricity prices for homeowners and businesses, a need to build costly new electric transmission infrastructure, and the likelihood of job losses in the manufacturing sector as companies relocate in search of” lower electricity costs.

I too am concerned. So I urge the McGuinty Liberals to stand up and show some concern for our people, our jobs and our industry.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Given this morning and now: In the old days—very old days, by the way—there was full-time kindergarten, but they had to take a nap at noon hour. I just thought I'd let you know that.

VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): A point of order from the member from Oxford.

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: Mr. Speaker, earlier today, during the introduction of visitors, I mentioned that the Innerkip Central public school grade 5 class would be with us. They weren't here at the time, but they are here now, so I'd like the Legislature to recognize them.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): That's not a point of order, but we are welcoming them, and I can ask you if you had your nap at noon hour today too. So we'll have to carry on with this.

RAY HAGGERTY

Hon. James J. Bradley: Mr. Speaker, I believe we have unanimous consent that up to five minutes be allowed to each party to speak in remembrance of the late Ray Haggerty.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Do we have unanimous consent? Agreed.

Minister of the Environment.

Hon. James J. Bradley: Mr. Speaker, this is the time we always hope doesn't come about, and that is that someone is going to pass away, but it's inevitable for all of us.

I knew Ray Haggerty extremely well because he was in a riding very close to mine, and he was one of my mentors.

He was first elected in 1967. You have to remember that from 1967 to 1975, there were no constituency offices, so your house was the constituency office. There were no buffers—no staff there to answer the phones or to help with the writing out of answers and so on. You were it—you and your spouse, usually. Marie was a gem because she worked with Ray and members of the family on issues of great importance to the people of—well, the riding had many names: Welland South, Niagara South, Erie. It had a number of names over the years.

Ray was a consummate constituency person. I know we always say that when we're paying tribute to people, because we're all constituency people, but Ray was it, I'm going to tell you. This guy, back in the days—and I knew other members who did that—he went to a WSIB hearing with the constituent, or one of the other panels that a constituent would appear before, and helped with the actual preparation of the case and so on. So Ray was very, very hands-on.

He always felt that it was important to go to the fire halls. He said that that's where you really learn what's going on, because, of course, being in a kind of a rural riding, for the most part—there were some towns and cities. But in rural ridings, the volunteer firefighters would certainly provide for you, as well as the professional firefighters, what was going on in the community. So Ray was very good at that.

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He helped out youth groups. He worked extremely well with the schools. I was talking to my brother, Ted Bradley, a little while ago, who knew Ray very well and lived in Port Colborne and was a school principal in Sherkston at one time. He said that Ray was just marvelous to work with the schools. Anything the schools wanted, anything the kids wanted, Ray was there to help out. My brother was also a commanding officer of sea cadets in Port Colborne, and again, he said that Ray and his brothers would really help out with anything that would happen in terms of fundraising for organizations such as theirs.

He was not a man of few words. At one time in the House, there were no limits on speeches. We would threaten—our party—if the government were becoming

too difficult, to have Ray give a four-hour speech if perhaps they wouldn't see their way to moving some issue along the way we would like to move it along. Ray was great. He could actually speak for four hours on everything and everybody in his constituency. So he was the kind of person who really knew everybody in the constituency.

He also used to love driving his tractor. I think he was the president of the plowman's association in his part of the province as well.

I went to the funeral. I went to the visitation as well. What you saw there were people of all different political affiliations and no political affiliation. Every one of them had a Ray Haggerty story of what Ray had done for them individually or for the constituency in one way or another.

He always had a smile on his face, always a greeting, a little quip, a little joke from time to time to lighten things up. I know that people missed him when he decided to retire in 1990. He had had various positions: parliamentary assistant to a number of ministers, for instance; critic, when he was in opposition. But he will always be remembered as the Niagara person, particularly the Niagara South person, and as a friend of so many within the community.

He came from a different era of MPP. There was no television in the House until 1975, so I guess you could send back the Hansards, and people, if they didn't have anything else to do, would read those Hansards. But you would find a significant contribution from Ray Haggerty.

I would like to say this about Ray: that he could be called Landslide Ray. He was elected in 1967 by 107 votes, in 1971 by 438 votes. He built it up as he went along, of course, and picked up the kind of support he needed.

To his wife, Marie, we offer our thanks for sharing Ray with us, because he was a great guy. Laurie, his daughter; Dennis and Tim, his sons; Craig Miner, who was his son-in-law; his brothers, Jim and Dick Haggerty, who worked with Ray so often; the grandchildren, Tim, Shane, Andrew and Michael—to all of them, we offer our thanks.

The constituency he represented and the people of the province of Ontario were better because of the kind of service that Ray Haggerty provided to his constituents and to our province.

Mr. Rick Nicholls: I humbly stand in the Legislature today to rise on behalf of my colleagues in the PC caucus to offer tribute to former Niagara South MPP Ray Haggerty. But before I begin, I'd like to recognize the members of Mr. Haggerty's family—his wife, Marie, and his daughter, Laurie—and give my respects to the rest of Mr. Haggerty's family who are watching from home today.

Whenever we take the time to remember a colleague who has left us, I think it's important for us to keep in mind the friends and the family who so proudly carry on that person's legacy. Certainly any mark that any one of us here in the Legislative Assembly manages to leave on

their communities is due, in no small part, to the love, support and patience of our loved ones, the people who helped us door-knock, shuffled papers at the office and waited up when we were late at the office serving our constituents.

From what I've learned about Ray, I can imagine that he spent more than a few late nights at Queen's Park. From nearly every single account of the man, even in the opinions of his opponents, he was a guy whose popularity in the Niagara region was never, ever in doubt.

He worked hard, and his constituents rewarded that hard work by sending him back to the Legislature in six consecutive elections. That's a run of 23 years. An entire generation of Niagara South residents grew up, attended grade school, then high school, went on to jobs and university, all under the watchful gaze of Mr. Haggerty. That's a longer political career than Franklin Roosevelt, longer than Pierre Trudeau, and nearly as long as Pope John Paul II. In the current Canadian political climate, that's no small achievement.

But Ray's success shocked exactly no one. Forgive me for quoting from a Progressive Conservative in honouring a Liberal MPP, but I think the following passage is important: "Ray's so well-liked in this riding that it could really work against us if we tried to go around saying he hasn't done a good job. His representation has been solid." That's from the St. Catharines Standard, on the eve of the May 1985 election. Even his opponents knew what they were up against: A veteran MPP that had already spent many political lifetimes ensuring that his constituents were having their voices heard in the Legislature.

Two years later, Ray would win again with the most impressive result ever—over 11,000 votes, more than double those of the opposing candidates. This was in a brand new riding, not the familiar old Erie riding that he knew so well.

By all accounts, Ray stuck closely to his small-town roots outside of Queen's Park duties. A machinist by trade and a staunch union man, Ray fashioned his own hand railings around the House and served as a volunteer firefighter in Port Colborne. When he retired in 1990, his intent was to keep up with his hobby of restoring antique trucks.

He was something of a rebel within his own party, much like the modern-day Liberal member from Niagara Falls, Mr. Craitor. It must be something in the water.

Ray almost sounded downright Conservative at times. He once was quoted as saying he disagreed with most of the parties of the day, even his own, in how to go about creating jobs in Ontario. He didn't believe government could "go around just giving out handouts to industries."

In 1980, he addressed the Legislature on the subject of national unity. It was a contentious time, as many of us will remember. The Prime Minister was attempting to bring the Constitution home, and not everyone was pleased about it. The "long knives" were out, as René Lévesque said. Yet Ray stood in the House to declare his support for a unified Canada, and even went so far as to

call for an elected Senate, a topic that still resonates today.

I say this not to claim Ray as a closeted Ontario PC member, though I am certain there were many on the opposite benches that would have liked to have counted him among their number. I say this because he was truly an MPP who not only took pride in his Liberal roots, but managed to harmonize those beliefs with his own gut feelings. I can tell you, being from a small-town riding myself, people notice that. You can't fake sincerity of self; if you tried, the folks in a small town, whether it's Port Colborne or my home town of Chatham, will notice.

Ray knew, in his final election, that he would soon be hanging up his boots. He went out on top, leaving room for the next generation of eager MPPs. One of those who would follow was our own PC leader, Tim Hudak. I know Ray took time to offer advice to Tim, who was a rookie MPP from the Niagara region in 1995. I know that, being a rookie MPP myself, I would gladly have accepted Ray's advice if I'd had the chance to meet him. It's clear from his track record that this was a man who knew how to serve his constituents, how to listen and how to sympathize.

One thing I do share with Ray, however, is the pride of serving as a labour critic in the opposition. It's not a glamorous role, but it is an important one, one that requires the ability to connect with the workers that have built this province. As a builder himself, Ray clearly would have had that touch. I hope I can approximate that.

I'd like to thank my fellow members for giving me the opportunity to speak to the legacy of our colleague Ray. And of course, thank you to his family for sharing him with us and the people of Ontario. You know, regardless of party or politics, every one of us hopes to live up to the very high standard that he set in the Ontario Legislature.

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Ms. Cindy Forster: On behalf of the NDP caucus, I'm happy to get up here and speak about Ray Haggerty today. In fact, two municipalities in the former Erie riding are actually part of my riding today as we're here.

I met Ray only once or twice in my life, when I was kind of lobbying with labour here at Queen's Park. I found him to be gracious and humorous. He was a good listener, and he was a fighter for health and safety issues for workers in this province.

He passed away in April last year, but in life he represented for more than 30 years constituents in his riding, parts of my riding and probably parts of other people's ridings. He was a councillor for Bertie township. He was also on Welland council as a councillor. For all those years, he represented vigorously and with determination. He didn't just talk about the issues.

His family, as we've heard, is watching on television today: his wife, Marie; his two sons, Tim and Dennis; his daughter, Laurie, and her husband; and the grandchildren. When I was having a look at this stuff, I noted that he often talked about his missus, Marie. The St. Catharines Standard quoted him in 1985 as saying, "We should get Mrs. Haggerty in there to manage On-

tario's money the way she runs mine, then we wouldn't have all these deficit problems."

Over the weekend, I had the opportunity to speak to Marie and Tim—Tim I've known for many years—because I wanted you to know about Ray the man, and I didn't know a lot about him myself. He grew up in Port Colborne. He moved to Sherkston, a rural part of the Erie riding along the lake, and he bought a home with 25 acres of property. He called himself a farmer, but his son says he was a gentleman farmer. He planted tomatoes, which he sold to a local cannery. He planted corn, which he sold to the Americans that populated the lake in the summer. He raised chickens for brooders as well.

He was a steelworker, a machinist by trade, a union man who held positions of union steward and shop steward in workplaces he had before politics became his job. He was a member of the Odd Fellows, a volunteer firefighter for Port Colborne in the early days, chair of the Niagara South Plowing Match and Niagara Antique Power. Over those years, he acquired seven antique tractors, which still sit on his farm property in Sherkston, one for each of his grandchildren, although they don't know what they'll do with them.

The family says that Marie was his right-hand woman and that she was the glue that held the family together while he was at Queen's Park doing what he did so well. She said it was difficult raising three kids and farming 25 acres, but his brothers and their families helped out a lot. She said that life as the wife and family of a politician can be lonely, but they picked up the threads on the weekend, in her words, and Ray never brought his Queen's Park disagreements home.

She said he could fix anything because he was a machinist, a millwright; however, trying to get him to do it was another thing. She often had to threaten to call someone, and it would cost money, and then he would get down to business. She said it was an interesting life, with many friends from all political stripes. They attended many events. The best thing was that she didn't have to cook on the weekends.

His son told me he was a God-fearing man, never drank or smoked, and was set in his ways. He loved golf, and often his golf cronies would pick him up in Niagara Falls at the train station, and they'd go off for a golf game before he even headed home on a Thursday night or at the end of his week.

Both of his sons got the political bug: his son Tim, three rounds of council for Fort Erie; and his son Dennis, four elected terms in Port Elgin. His daughter, Laurie, was very active in all of his campaigns.

Tim laughed, though, when he told me a story about a speech at an event a few years ago. He was talking about when kids leave home. Generally, it's the kids who leave home. They go to school, they get married or they go out and find a job. He said, "In my family, it was Dad who left home in 1967, and he never returned again until politics was over." He said he got quite a chuckle about that.

During his years at Queen's Park, he pushed hard on a lot of issues. He was, I guess, in part responsible for the

Good Samaritan Act, WSIB reform, health and safety reform; and public access to our beaches here in Ontario, which was a big issue for him.

He was a politician who worked with all political parties to get something achieved in the House. He was well respected, well loved by his family and his constituents, and our caucus sends our condolences to the family, to his friends. Thank you for sharing him with us and the province for all those years.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I want to thank all the members for their kind and generous words to bring praise and honour to a former member, and also your kind words to the family. I will make steps to ensure that those kind words are relayed to the family members on all of our behalf. I thank you for that.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

NEW DRIVERS' INSURANCE RATE REDUCTION ACT, 2012

LOI DE 2012 SUR LA RÉDUCTION DES TAUX D'ASSURANCE-AUTOMOBILE POUR LES NOUVEAUX CONDUCTEURS

Mr. Sergio moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 71, An Act to amend the Insurance Act to provide for lower insurance rates for new drivers / Projet de loi 71, Loi modifiant la Loi sur les assurances afin de prévoir des taux d'assurance-automobile moins élevés pour les nouveaux conducteurs.

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. Mario Sergio: Thank you very much, Speaker. The bill requires a risk classification system used by an insurer to determine rates for automobile insurance to provide for lower rates for new drivers by crediting new drivers with additional years of driving experience. A new driver is disqualified from receiving additional years of credit in a number of circumstances, including if the driver has been convicted of certain driving offences or has had his or her driver's licence suspended for non-payment of a certain fine.

In a nutshell, Speaker, the bill speaks of giving our young people, first-time drivers, a chance to be proven innocent until proven guilty. So far, our young people have had a rough ride when they first get a driver's licence. To try and get insurance has been very difficult and very expensive, and I hope that, with the consent of the House, we can finally do something for our young people in Ontario.

NOTICES OF POINTS OF PRIVILEGE

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I have received three notices of intent to raise points of privilege. One

was received this morning, and I am prepared to hear that motion. The other two were received just this afternoon, one just since I've been sitting at the Chair, and as they are quite lengthy, I'm not prepared to hear those immediately. Since they are both dealing with matters that occurred starting several days ago, I trust it will not be too much of a problem to deal with them tomorrow.

In addition, we have of late engaged in a practice that I agree with of sharing the notices with the other parties. There is no indication at this time that that has been done, and I would ask Ms. McKenna or Mr. Leone that if this has not occurred, to share that. If it has, I apologize for not knowing ahead of time.

MEMBER'S COMMENTS

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I'm recognizing the member for Parry Sound–Muskoka for his point of privilege.

Mr. Norm Miller: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise on a point of privilege for which I gave verbal notice on Thursday, April 19, and written notice today, April 23, to both you and the House leaders.

The question of privilege relates to comments by the Deputy Premier, the member from Windsor–Tecumseh, in response to a question from the member from Newmarket–Aurora during question period on Thursday, April 19, 2012, related to my role as Chair of the Standing Committee on Public Accounts. The Hansard will show that in his response the member from Windsor–Tecumseh implies a lack of impartiality on my part in fulfilling my duties as Chair.

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As you also know, the Standing Committee on Public Accounts is currently undertaking hearings on the Auditor General's special report on Ornge, and it is my legislative duty to preside over those hearings.

This comes on the heels of another incident questioning my impartiality by Mr. Grahame Rivers, the Premier's former social media coordinator. Mr. Rivers used Twitter to impugn my character and infer that I could not impartially perform my duties as Chair of the Standing Committee on Public Accounts. The message unjustly damages my good name and reputation in what I believe is an effort to intimidate me and interfere with my legislative duties as Chair of the public accounts committee.

Again, there can be no mistaking the message inferred by Mr. Rivers's tweet. You may recall that it was the subject of a question put by the member for Nickel Belt, Ms. Gélinas, during question period on April 3, 2012.

I should note that the tweet has since been re-tweeted by Warren Kinsella, Bryan Leblanc, the Nickel Belt Liberal riding association and, I'm sure, others.

With respect to the point of privilege I'm asserting, I am supported by parliamentary authorities. House of Commons Procedures and Practice, second edition, 2009, section 13, "Rules of Order and Decorum," "Reflections on the Chair," states: "Reflections must not be cast in debate on the conduct of the Speaker or other presiding

officers. It is unacceptable to question the integrity and impartiality of a presiding officer and if such comments are made, the Speaker will interrupt the member and may request that the remarks be withdrawn."

In addition, page 500 of the Parliament of Australia's House of Representatives Practice, fifth edition, under "References to and Reflections on Members," states: "Offensive words may not be used against any member and all imputations of improper motives to a member and all personal reflections on other members are considered to be highly disorderly."

Furthermore, reference is made to the accepted procedure for making such an imputation: "The practice of the House, based on that of the House of Commons, is that members can only direct a charge against other members or reflect upon their character or conduct upon a substantive motion which admits of a distinct vote of the House."

The authority for this principle is derived from Erskine May's Treatise on the Law, Privileges, Proceedings and Usage of Parliament, 23rd edition, page 387, which states: "No charge of a personal character in respect of these categories of person can be raised except on a direct and substantive motion. No statement of that kind can be incorporated in a broader motion, nor, for example, included in a reply to a question."

Mr. Speaker, I draw to your attention a similar case and the December 17, 2009, ruling of Speaker Boudreau of New Brunswick. I'll read directly from the statement by Speaker Boudreau:

"While I am on my feet, I will give my decision on the question of privilege raised by the honourable Minister of Tourism and Parks, on Tuesday of this week, concerning statements made by members of this assembly outside the House which cast doubt on the impartiality of an officer of the assembly, namely the Deputy Speaker, the honourable member for Miramichi-Bay du Vin.

"I want to thank both the Minister of Tourism and Parks and the member for Rothesay for their comments.

"I have considered the remarks in question and the allegations of bias made against the Deputy Speaker by the Leader of the Opposition and by the member for Saint John Portland and published in The Daily Gleaner, the Telegraph-Journal, and the Times and Transcript of December 12, 2009, and in the Miramichi Leader of December 14, 2009.

"I have reviewed the parliamentary authorities, and there is no question regarding the seriousness of reflections and allegations of this nature on chair occupants. Reflections on the character or actions of the Speaker or other presiding officers have been ruled to be breaches of privilege.

"Remarks critical of the Speakership, be they uttered inside the House or outside the chamber, particularly when uttered by a member of the House, are very serious and in themselves have been ruled to be breaches of privilege as noted in citation 168(1) of Beauchesne's Parliamentary Rules and Forms, sixth edition at page 49:

“Reflections upon the character or actions of the Speaker may be punished as breaches of privilege. The actions of the Speaker cannot be criticized incidentally in debate or upon any form of proceeding except by way of a substantive motion.”

“Allegations of bias are in themselves a form of intimidation or attempted intimidation. I would like to quote from Marleau and Montpetit’s House of Commons Procedure and Practice, second edition, 2009, where it is stated at page 116:

“The intimidation or attempted intimidation of the Speaker or any other chair occupant is viewed very seriously by the House. On three occasions, the House has viewed criticisms of the impartiality of the Chair as attempts at intimidation and, therefore, as privilege matters. On December 22, 1976, the House adopted a motion finding that a statement made in a newspaper article about Speaker Jerome was “a gross libel on Mr. Speaker and that the publication of the article was a gross breach of privileges of the House.” On March 23, 1993, Speaker Fraser ruled that a member’s comments about the impartiality of a chair occupant constituted a prima facie case of privilege, noting that an attack against the integrity of an officer of the House was also an attack against the House.”

“Colleagues, as the Speaker, it is my duty to protect this institution and the officers who serve and represent it. They must be protected against reflections on their actions.

“Only by means of a substantive motion, for which the required two days’ notice has been given, may the actions of the Chair be challenged, criticized or debated.

“I therefore find that there is a prima facie case of a breach of privilege.”

I believe that Speaker Boudreau’s decision speaks to both the comments raised by the member from Windsor–Tecumseh and the issue of the tweet by Mr. Rivers.

I am further supported by parliamentary authorities and House of Commons Procedure and Practice, where O’Brien and Bosc stated that “Speakers have consistently upheld the right of the House to the services of its members free from intimidation.”

Speaker Lamoureux stated in a 1973 ruling that “no hesitation in reaffirming the principle that parliamentary privilege includes the right of a member to discharge his responsibilities as a member of the House free from threats or attempts at intimidation.”

O’Brien and Bosc conclude that:

“It is impossible to codify all incidents which might be interpreted as matters of obstruction, interference, molestation or intimidation and as such constitute prima facie cases of privilege. However, some matters found to be prima facie include the damaging of a member’s reputation ... the intimidation of members and their staff and of witnesses before committees, and the provision of misleading information.”

Citation 93 of Beauchesne’s Parliamentary Rules and Forms, sixth edition, states, “It is generally that any

threat or attempt to influence the vote of, or actions of a member, is breach of privilege.”

In Parliamentary Privilege in Canada, Maingot provides for the novel aspect of cases dealing with the publication on the Internet, including through Twitter. At page 225, Maingot notes, “While privilege may be codified, contempt may not, because new forms of obstruction are constantly being devised and Parliament must be able to invoke its penal jurisdiction to protect itself against these new forms....”

Maingot also offers an articulate review of the balance to consider between free and democratic expression—or even critical speech—and a breach of privilege or contempt. At page 235 he states:

“All interferences with members’ privileges of freedom of speech, such as editorials and other public comment, are not breaches of privilege even though they influence the conduct of members in their parliamentary work.... But any attempt by improper means to influence or obstruct a member in his parliamentary work may constitute contempt. What constitutes an improper means of interfering with members’ parliamentary work is always a question depending on the facts of each case.”

I am also supported by parliamentary precedent. Speaker Parent, on March 24, 1994, stated, “Threats of blackmail or intimidation of a member of Parliament should never be taken lightly. When such occurs, the very essence of free speech is undermined. Without the guarantee of freedom of speech, no member of Parliament can do his duty as expected.”

This brings me back to the comment by the Deputy Premier, the member for Windsor–Tecumseh. The comments by the member from Windsor–Tecumseh in this House damage the reputation for fairness and integrity that I have earned over the past decade since I was elected as the member for Parry Sound–Muskoka in 2001. It implies I acted improperly by meeting with a public agency, despite no evidence being offered by the member from Windsor–Tecumseh. I believe it is an attempt to intimidate me.

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If the member from Windsor–Tecumseh has evidence instead of innuendo, let him produce it. If the Premier’s office or government caucus believes I should recuse myself, let them have the courage to say so and bring a substantive motion.

Rather than act honourably, they impugn my integrity and reputation and, in doing so, unduly interfere with my work as Chair.

Upon your ruling that a prima facie breach of privilege exists, I’m prepared to move that the matter be referred to an appropriate committee of the Legislature.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Please be seated.

On the same order, the member from Trinity—the member from Timmins–James Bay. I start with the letter and I lose it. The member from Timmins–James Bay.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: It’s no problem. I get names wrong, Ralph.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Order.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Thank you, Speaker, for bringing me to order. Everybody laughs in my caucus because they know, in fact, I'm really bad at names.

I just want to put a couple of things on the record from our perspective here in the NDP caucus, and that is that I think that the point the member raises is a valid one. I'm just going to go through the reasons why I think it's important that you give this serious consideration, which I know you will, but I want to add to it.

If you look at what was said—and I'm just going to quote from the Hansard—Mr. Duncan, on that particular date, said, “That motion that I referred to to call Mr. Mitchell to committee was in fact a government motion, and the Conservative Chair of the committee deferred dealing with it until next week.” I think he's sort of trying to imply that somehow or other that's being partisan.

We all know in this House that the Chair of a committee has a very important role. We form the committees by way of motion in the House. The committees then, by way of election amongst their own, elect a Chair, and that Chair is there to do a number of things.

I want to go to, in the orders and precedents, House of Commons Procedure and Practice, and draw your attention to pages 1030 and 1031. I'm not going to read it all because it's too long. I just want to come to the important part. It says, under “Procedural Responsibilities”:

“Chairs preside over committee meetings and oversee committee work. They recognize the members, witnesses and other people who wish to speak at these meetings; as in the House, all remarks are addressed to the Chair. They ensure that any rules established by the committee, including those on the apportioning of speaking time, are respected. They are responsible for maintaining order and decorum in committee proceedings, and rule on any procedural matter that arises, subject to an appeal to the committee.”

It says, under “Administrative responsibilities”—and this is the point: “Committee Chairs have considerable administrative responsibilities, starting with those involving the committee's program of activities. In compliance with instructions from the committee or an order from the House” itself—and it says, second point:

“—decides on the agendas for the meeting;”

What was at subject here is when the committee was going to deal with an actual item, it's clearly within the purview of the Chair, in consultation with the committee, obviously, to decide what the agenda is going to be.

“—cancels scheduled meetings or modifies agendas if an unexpected development makes this necessary”—and if there are no committee meetings before the meeting, they need to be cancelled or whatever. Clearly, there is a responsibility on the Chair to ensure that things are dealt with that are following the standing orders, that follow the precedents and also allow the committee to deal with things in an orderly fashion.

I think that's what the member was trying to do, and I think for the minister to somehow say that he was being partisan was a bit beyond the pale.

I end on this note: The minister does say, “I don't want to offend the sensibilities of the Chair or the House. I won't use some language, but it appears as though they won't want him at committee.”

That is a pretty serious statement. All of us here are partisan to a degree: I am; you are; everyone is. But once we get into the position of Chair, as you as our Speaker, we take on a different responsibility. I think for the integrity of this House and to ensure that there is no grey when it comes to that particular understanding that all members here are honourable, and when they take the position of Chair of a committee or they chair this House, as you are, Mr. Speaker—that we give them our confidence and understand that, at times, I may not agree with you, Speaker, on what you've done as far as a ruling or whatever, but you are the Chair and as long as you follow the rules of the House, I have to live with that and I have to accept it.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Government House leader on the same order.

Hon. John Milloy: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I've had an opportunity to—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Excuse me. I listen carefully to everyone, and I've got to hear them, please.

Hon. John Milloy: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I had a chance to read the hand-delivered letter that was sent to yourself and to all the House leaders a number of hours ago from the member from Parry Sound–Muskoka. I had some comments on the case that he has outlined in his letter and also in the Legislature today.

I want to begin, however, by stating very clearly and unequivocally my respect, and the respect of members on this side of the House, for the member from Parry Sound–Muskoka. He is a long-standing parliamentarian. He is someone with an outstanding reputation, and there was no attempt to tarnish that reputation through any of the matters that were put forward.

That being said, Mr. Speaker, I've had a chance to look through the arguments. The question that is being put forward today is one of whether the member's privileges were, obviously, breached by the exchange within question period. Having had, as I say, a chance to examine and to look at the source material, I think that if anything, the member from Parry Sound–Muskoka may want to claim that the comments that were made raise a question of order but certainly not one of privilege. I'd like to just go through a number of authorities which I think say that the point of privilege that is being raised is not valid, according to parliamentary rules and customs.

The member from Parry Sound–Muskoka relies, for example, on O'Brien and Bosc, page 614: “Reflections must not be cast in debate on the conduct of the Speaker or other presiding officers. It is unacceptable to question the integrity and impartiality of a presiding officer and if such comments are made, the Speaker will interrupt the member and may request that the remarks be withdrawn.”

The Speaker will be aware that the Chair of a standing committee is not a presiding officer of this House, and

therefore the passage that has been cited has no application to the current circumstances. Sections 3 to 5 of the standing orders state that the presiding officers of the Legislative Assembly of Ontario include the Speaker, the Deputy Speaker and Chair of the Committee of the Whole House, and the Deputy Speakers. The member from Parry Sound–Muskoka is not a presiding officer when he serves in his capacity as Chair of the public accounts committee.

The member for Parry Sound–Muskoka further cites page 500 of the House of Representatives Practice from the Parliament of Australia. The Speaker will note that this passage does not speak to matters of privilege but rather matters of order. It therefore has no relevance to the claims asserted in the point of privilege that has been put forward by the member from Parry Sound–Muskoka.

Finally, the member cites page 387 of Erskine May's second edition to assert that a member may make no "charge of a personal character" except by means of a direct and substantive motion. While this passage may speak to the proper proceedings for making such a charge, it neither demonstrates that the Deputy Premier made such a charge, nor, if he did, that it constituted a breach of privilege.

In sum, the member for Parry Sound–Muskoka has failed to cite any relevant authority to suggest that the comments of the Deputy Premier constitute a prima facie case of privilege. I suggest this because the Deputy Premier's comments do not fall under any of the recognized categories of privilege as set out in the various authorities commonly referenced in this House.

I conclude, though, Mr. Speaker, where I began, which is that we're having a debate about the technical rules and conventions of Parliament in terms of what is a point of privilege versus, perhaps in this case, a point of order. But at the same time, Mr. Speaker, I want to reiterate on behalf of the government and on behalf of myself our continuing respect for the member, and the fact that he enjoys an unimpeachable reputation as a member of the Legislature.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I want to thank the members for their participation in this very important issue, and I will endeavour to delve into this and report back to the House sharply. Thank you so much.

PETITIONS

WIND TURBINES

Mr. John O'Toole: I'm pleased to present a petition on behalf of my constituents in the riding of Durham, and it reads as follows—the member from Norfolk would have got in:

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"Whereas there is a growing body of evidence confirming industrial wind development has serious adverse effects on host communities;

"Whereas over 135 people in Ontario have reported serious negative health effects from industrial wind development, and at least a dozen families have been bought out of their homes" to silence them;

"Whereas Ontario's Green Energy Act has ended local planning control by stripping municipal councils of their rights;

"Whereas 80 municipal councils, representing two million Ontarians, called on the government to put in place a full moratorium on industrial wind development until an independent epidemiological health study is completed, proper environmental regulations and protections are put in place and local democracy is restored;

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

"Immediately put" in place "a moratorium on all industrial wind proposals; fund an independent epidemiological health study to develop safe setbacks; legislate those findings; develop stringent environmental protection standards for natural areas; and require all projects to comply with regulations based on science and local planning," and not on McGuinty policies.

I'm pleased to sign and support this, and present it to William, one of the pages here.

ONTARIO NORTHLAND TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION

Mr. John Vanthof: I'm pleased to submit this petition with another 1,000 signatures.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Ontario Northland Transportation Commission provides services which are vital to the north's economy; and

"Whereas it is a lifeline for the residents of northern communities who have no other source of public transportation; and

"Whereas the ONTC could be a vital link to the Ring of Fire;

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

"That the planned cancellation of the Northlander and the sale of the rest of the assets of the Ontario Northland Transportation Commission be halted immediately."

I hereby sign the petition and give it to page Katarina.

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: My petition is in regard to escaping domestic violence.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas all Ontarians have the right to a safe home environment;

"Whereas the government of Ontario works to reduce all barriers in place that prevent victims of domestic violence from fleeing abusive situations;

"Whereas the Residential Tenancies Act does not take into consideration the special circumstances facing a tenant who is suffering from abuse;

“Whereas those that live in fear for their personal safety and that of their children should not be financially penalized for the early termination of their residential leases;

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

“That Bill 22, the Escaping Domestic Violence Act ... be adopted so that victims of domestic violence be afforded a mechanism for the early termination of their lease to allow them to leave an abusive relationship and find a safe place for themselves and their children to call home.”

Speaker, I agree with this petition and affix my signature, and send it to the table via page Georgia.

INDUSTRIE DES COURSES
DE CHEVAUX
HORSE RACING INDUSTRY

M^{me} Lisa MacLeod: À l'Assemblée législative de l'Ontario, par l'entremise de l'honorable Madeleine Meilleur et l'honorable Bob Chiarelli :

“Attendu que l'industrie ontarienne des courses et d'élevage de chevaux génère à elle seule plus de 2 milliards de dollars en activité économique; et

“Whereas more than 60,000 Ontarians are employed by Ontario's horse racing and breeding industry;

“Whereas 20% of the funds generated by the OLG slots-at-racetracks program is reinvested in racetracks and the horse racing and breeding industry, while 75% is returned to the government of Ontario;

“Whereas the OLG slots-at-racetracks program generates \$1.3 billion a year for health care and other spending, making it the most profitable form of gaming in the province for OLG;

“Whereas the government has announced plans to cancel the slots-at-racetracks program, a decision that will cost the government \$1.1 billion a year and threatens more than 60,000 jobs;

“Compte tenu de ce qui précède, nous, soussignés, adressons à l'Assemblée législative de l'Ontario la pétition suivante :

“Call on the Ontario government to protect the \$1.1 billion of revenue the government received annually because of the OLG slots-at-racetracks program; direct OLG to honour the contracts with racetracks and protect the horse racing and breeding industry by continuing the OLG slots-at-racetracks revenue-sharing program.”

Speaker, last evening my colleagues from Leeds–Grenville and from Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry accepted 25,000 signatures—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Petitions? The member for Nickel Belt.

HORSE RACING INDUSTRY

M^{me} France Gélinas: I had the pleasure to meet a great number of young families in my riding who gave me this petition, and it reads as follows:

“Whereas the Ontario horse racing and breeding industry generates \$2 billion of economic activity, mostly in rural Ontario,” including in Nickel Belt; and

“Whereas more than 60,000 Ontarians are employed by Ontario's horse racing and breeding industry,” including 600 of them in Nickel Belt;

“Whereas 20% of the funds generated by the OLG slots-at-racetracks program is reinvested in racetracks and the horse racing and breeding industry, while 75% is returned to the government of Ontario;

“Whereas the OLG slots-at-racetracks program generates \$1.1 billion a year for health care and other spending, making it the most profitable form of gaming in the province for OLG;

“Whereas the” Ontario “government has announced plans to cancel the slots-at-racetracks program, a decision that will cost the government \$1.1 billion per year and threatens more than 60,000 jobs,” including 600 of them in Nickel Belt;

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

“Call on the government of Ontario to protect the \$1.1 billion of revenue the government received annually because of the OLG slots-at-racetracks program; direct OLG to honour the contracts with racetracks and protect the horse racing and breeding industry by continuing the OLG slots-at-racetracks revenue-sharing program.”

I'm supportive of this petition, will affix my name to it and ask page Andrew to bring it to the Clerk.

ONTARIO BUDGET

Ms. Soo Wong: I have a petition from my riding of Scarborough–Agincourt, addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, which states:

“Whereas a progressive Ontario budget calls for bold and decisive deficit reduction action to ensure that Ontario remains the most attractive and competitive place in North America to set up or relocate a business, raise a family or build a career; and

“Whereas the government of Ontario has introduced a budget that sets out a five-year deficit reduction, leading to a balanced budget by fiscal year 2017-18, while preserving Ontario's progress in infrastructure, health care and education; and

“Whereas the 2012-13 Ontario budget proposes \$4 of expense reduction for every dollar raised in new revenues, with such expense reduction including implementation of key recommendations in the Drummond report, eliminating overlap and duplication, and compensation restraint in the Ontario broader public sector;

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

“That the elected members of all parties support the comprehensive set of financial measures and expense reductions proposed in the 2012-13 Ontario budget to enable Ontario to balance its budget on schedule; enhance its world-leading position; and attract, build and retain the people, careers and companies to build a strong Ontario for generations to come.”

I support this petition and affix my signature to it, and page—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Thank you. The member for Haldimand–Norfolk.

AGGREGATE EXTRACTION

Mr. Toby Barrett: I have signatures on a petition for justice and MNR compliance to OMB and ARA legislation [*inaudible*] from Nichols Gravel Ltd.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas officials of MNR Aylmer district April 1, 2003, illegally imposed on licence 103717 without legislative or delegated authority preconditions to be completed prior to operation of the quarry, which in fact were impossible to complete without quarry operations, and then used ARA legislation to revoke the licence for non-compliance, when to this date no ‘operational licence’ has yet been delivered to Nichols Gravel Ltd. under direction of OMB order 1194;

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

“For an order to the Ministry of Natural Resources and the Ministry of the Attorney General to comply with the legislation of the Aggregate Resources Act, OMB Act 86(1), to Superior Court judgment order July 23, 2007, to OMB order 1194, and the court (June 15, 2006 judicial review declaratory order to attachment ‘A’ to conditions of licence 103717) to which these two ministries and the Ontario Legislature remain in contempt of court for failure to respond to a petition of April 21, 2009, P-23, which previously identified this legislation and court orders;

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“And a further order to request the RCMP to investigate the Ministry of Natural Resources and the Ministry of the Attorney General for conspiracy to restrict competition, contrary to the federal Combines Act, s. 45(c), abuse of discretionary authority to obstruction of justice through numerous withdrawals of criminal charges to the continued enforcement of the illegal revoke of licence 103717 based on preoperational conditions not directed at OMB order 1194 or licence 103717.

“Reference: www.injusticecanada.com, miscarriage of justice series 1 to 10.”

I affix my signature to these other signatures.

DIAGNOSTIC SERVICES

M^{me} France Gélinas: I have this petition from the people of the northeast, and it reads as follows:

“Whereas the Ontario government” has made PET scanning “a publicly insured health service...; and”

That since “October 2009, insured PET scans” are “performed in Ottawa, London, Toronto, Hamilton and Thunder Bay; and

“Whereas the city of Greater Sudbury is a hub for health care in northeastern Ontario, with” Health Sciences North, “its regional cancer program and the Northern Ontario School of Medicine;”

They “petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to make PET scans available through” Health Sciences North, “thereby serving and providing equitable access to the citizens of northeastern Ontario.”

I fully support this petition and ask page Shanice to bring it to the Clerk.

EDUCATION FUNDING

Mr. Phil McNeely: This is from parents in the Avalon community of Ottawa–Orleans.

“To the Legislature of Ontario:

“Whereas the current enrolment of Avalon Public School is 687 students;

“Whereas the student capacity of the school is 495 students, as determined by the Ministry of Education’s own occupancy formula;

“Whereas the issue of overcrowding and lack of space makes it impossible for Avalon Public School to offer full-day kindergarten until the overcrowding issue is addressed;

“Whereas Avalon Public School is located in a high-growth community;

“Whereas the enrolment at Avalon Public School is expected to continue rising at a rate of 10% to 15% a year for the foreseeable future;

“Whereas the Ottawa–Carleton District School Board has made building a new school in Avalon a top capital priority;

“We, the undersigned, call on the province of Ontario and Ministry of Education to provide the Ottawa–Carleton District School Board with the necessary funding to build an additional school in Avalon, to open no later than September 2014.”

I agree with this petition and I send it forward with Sabrina.

WATER QUALITY

Mr. Steve Clark: I have a petition with 111 signatures from the township of Front of Yonge and the village of Mallorytown. I want to thank Mayor Roger Haley of the council and especially Dana and Mike Purcell for their initiation on this petition.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas everyone believes Ontarians should have access to safe drinking water; and

“Whereas, under the Clean Water Act, 2006, source water protection committees must establish wellhead protection areas around municipal drinking water systems; and

“Whereas the well located at the Miller Manor housing complex in the village of Mallorytown has historically—and incorrectly—been defined as such a system; and

“Whereas maintaining the definition of the Miller Manor well as a municipal drinking water system is not in keeping with the intent of the legislation and would unnecessarily burden residents and businesses in

Mallorytown with regulations that will reduce property values and eliminate future economic development;

“Therefore, we, the undersigned, call on the Minister of the Environment to recognize that the Miller Manor well has been improperly classified and issue an order to exempt it from the scope of work being undertaken by the Cataraqui Region Conservation Authority source water protection committee.”

I agree with this petition, will affix my signature and I'll send it to the table with page Vincent.

TAXATION

M^{me} France Gélinas: I have this really short petition from the people of Nickel Belt, and it reads as follows:

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario....

To “take the unfair HST off of ... home heating....”

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

ALZHEIMER'S DISEASE

Mrs. Donna H. Cansfield: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas Alzheimer's disease is a degenerative brain disease that causes thinking and memory impairment. Alzheimer's disease is progressive, worsens over time, and will eventually lead to death;

“Whereas there are an estimated 181,000 Ontarians diagnosed with Alzheimer's and related dementia today, and that number is set to increase by 40% in the next 10 years;

“Whereas Alzheimer's disease creates social, emotional and economic burdens on the family and friends of those suffering with the disease;

“Whereas the total economic burden of dementia in Ontario is expected to increase by more than \$770 million per year through to 2020;

“We, the undersigned, call upon the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to establish an Alzheimer's advisory council to advise the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care on matters pertaining to strategy respecting research, treatment and the prevention of Alzheimer's and other related dementia.”

Mr. Speaker, this petition comes from the people of Sault Ste. Marie. I've signed my name. I agree with the petition and will give it to page William.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Unfortunately, that concludes the time available for petitions this afternoon.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

2012 ONTARIO BUDGET

Resuming the debate adjourned on April 19, 2012, on the motion that this House approves in general the budgetary policy of the government.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): When we last discussed this item, the member from Durham had the floor, and I now—

Mr. John O'Toole: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's a real pleasure today, on government order number 2, resuming the debate on approving the government's budgetary policies. Really, that's the contradiction here: We can't approve of these policies that don't address the size and cost of government and the whole cost of waste and scandalous activities going on.

I have a few things I have to take care of; one is turning off my cellphone.

Earlier today, in the tribute to Ray Haggerty, the member from Welland South—almost all the members—commended him for his frugality and his sense of loyalty to his constituents, and I think all members feel that way. A comment was made that his wife, Marie, was his best adviser in his financial things, who took care of his business. Well, I would call on the Deputy Premier, the Minister of Finance, Dwight Duncan, to call Marie and ask for her advice and what she thinks of what Dalton McGuinty is doing to the senior citizens in the province of Ontario.

Now, the family might be watching, and I would say email them and let them know, because really what this budget does is it raises taxes. It raises fees, your licence, all those things. It does everything, and it affects seniors. Look at your energy bill as an example. So that's why I think the people of Ontario need to be paying attention, speak to their counterparts and follow up.

Our leader, Tim Hudak, has made it clear to us that we can't be trapped in the false discussion here about this or that trade-off, when clearly Don Drummond—and as I say, I have the greatest respect for the former deputy minister, Paul Martin's finance deputy minister, and his calling on the government at the time in his report. I have a copy of the report here. Along with Mr. Drummond, it's important to put this on—Dominic Giroux, who's a commissioner, he's the president and vice-chancellor of Laurentian University, was also on there. Susan Pigott, who was a commissioner—and she's the vice-president of communications and community engagement at the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health, CAMH, in Toronto. These are qualified people. They're people who aren't of any political persuasion—not so much, anyway, in the most obvious sense. Although they were picked by Premier McGuinty, and they probably gave them the answer—“This is the answer we'd like you to provide.”

But let's put this in context. I see the member from Ottawa-Orléans is here. If you put it in context, Mr. McNeely, here's the deal. It's important to wrap this up, Mr. Speaker, in terms of—prior to the election, there's a report; it's required by law. You got a copy of it. Every member got a copy of it. This report was sent to all MPPs in June, dated June 28, from Jim McCarter. He's the Auditor General for Ontario. This is the Auditor General's Review of the 2011 Pre-Election Report on Ontario's Finances. In this report, the Auditor General, in June 2011, told everyone, including the Premier and the

Minister of Finance, that you have a structural deficit. He told them.

Now, it's important; this sizes it up. What did Premier McGuinty do? This is all factual. What he did is he appointed this commission I've just outlined, Mr. Drummond. So he took the whole issue of the budget off the table. It wasn't discussed during the election. What a shameful shell game. When I think of it, it's almost like chess. It's sort of like you have to take the rook and take out the bishop and all these things.

1420

Here's what that report said, that the assumptions both on the revenue and expenditure side were aggressively optimistic. I'm not plagiarizing here. This is verbatim. On page 18 of that report, here's what it says: "Actual and Projected Average Growth in Program Expenses by Major Sector" as a percentage. In health care, between 2003 and 2011, in an average year they were spending 7.1%. In education, from 2003 to 2011, they were spending 4.8%; post-secondary, 8.6%; children's services, 6.7%; justice 5.8%; other programs, 9.6%. On average, on all the ministries, program spending was going up 7% per year for eight years. They doubled the spending. They doubled the deficit, and they doubled the budget. The people of Ontario should say, "Is it any better?" In fact, it's worse. The conclusion by all the economists, including Don Drummond and these other illustrious leaders, is that it's a mess.

Interjection.

Mr. John O'Toole: It's a mess. They said, if they don't change their ways—this is what this vote tomorrow is about—we are going to double the deficit from around \$14 billion to \$30 billion. That's the operating shortfall. That means you're spending more than you're receiving in revenue by \$30 billion.

Where does that go? It goes into the accumulated debt. Well, the debt is going to double.

Mr. Peter Shurman: It's unsustainable.

Mr. John O'Toole: These unsustainable fundamentals are called a "structural deficit." So how can Tim Hudak ever start horse trading, so to speak, with a Premier who doesn't realize he has a spending problem and a Minister of Finance who I don't think cares. They would sooner cause an election or play some shell game like—and then I look at the whole scandal on the Ornge helicopter. My goodness. We called for a select committee on that to get to the bottom of Chris Mazza and the—

Mr. Jim Wilson: The truth.

Mr. John O'Toole: It was a truth commission, really, as our House leader Mr. Wilson says. It's in that vein that I get so frustrated and wondering how functional this place really is.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I need to remind the member that we're discussing the budget motion and ask him to confine his comments to that.

Mr. John O'Toole: I have the greatest respect for the Speaker, so I'm going to get to the budget.

Here's what it says. In the Drummond report—I'll keep it brief. This is the relevance of the budget motion,

which is to approve the spending, which is impossible. We've established that. Would you agree, Mr. Speaker? I'd like to have your opinion on that, and you'll get to vote later. Hopefully he'll vote with us.

But here's the real issue. There are 362 recommendations. Almost all of them said, "Stop digging."

Mr. Peter Shurman: I think he needs an hour.

Mr. John O'Toole: Can I get unanimous consent for an hour, please?

Mr. Peter Shurman: Agreed.

Interjections: No.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): The member for Durham is seeking unanimous consent to speak for an hour. Agreed? There is no agreement.

Mr. John O'Toole: Anyway, they don't want to hear the truth.

The critical assessment from my good friend Mr. Shurman and I sat—I listened to his speech. It was an hour. It was an amazing speech. In fact, I have a copy of Hansard. I'm going to use most of his material. But it was a 543-page report, and he gave them clear warning. He says, "Overall, the Drummond report indicates that the province's fiscal situation is worse than people realize. According to Drummond, if no changes are made to the government's policies, programs or practices, the commission projects that Ontario's deficit would reach \$30 billion by 2017-18 and the net debt would reach \$411 billion, equivalent to 51% of GDP."

Let's look at the debt part right now. Interest in Ontario is a function of monetary policy of the federal government; interest is quite low. The reason it's low is because the feds want to keep everybody spending, buying cars and houses and stuff like that to keep the economy—breathe some air into it. The economy otherwise is very flat, soft and fragile, if you read any reports. Interest is low right now and we're paying just over \$10 billion a year in interest to foreign investors or bondholders. Now, if the interest goes up even 1%, that'll cost us \$5 billion extra—additional. You won't get any more services, no more nurses, no more teachers. It will cost you more because you're spending too much. It's like, get rid of the credit card. I suspect in this budget thing, approving the expenditures, it's just not reliable or reasonable to do that.

How do I get these opinions, and why do I get so engaged? I think there's a few things. I'll just put them on the record here. This is an article here—I like to have independent, third party commentaries to legitimize my views. It's an article here from Artuso, from the Queen's Park bureau chief. She says here on February 27, 2009:

"These projections are based on existing spending patterns, and do not include any additional investments to stimulate the economy, Don Drummond said yesterday.

"Even to achieve the deficits"—this is Don Drummond, the expert; he actually knows what he's talking about—"they have to slightly tighten spending growth relative to what it's been in the recent past,"—kind words—"he said in an interview. 'It's a lot higher than people are thinking'"—referring to the deficit—"and it's

a graphic illustration to me that there is a structural deficit in Ontario.” That’s 2009.

They’ve known about this. They didn’t need the Auditor General’s report in 2011; they’ve known about it. They still know about it. The question then becomes: What have they done about it? Nothing. They bought every vote, you could say, with the Working Families and the rest of it.

Another article from the Financial Post: It says, “Ontario Budget 2011: Not Credible.” This is by economists. This isn’t some political tripe by some GR person in some highly paid office—probably working for the Premier.

Here’s another one. This is a very important one, too. I think these are part of important things. This is a report—the first piece of advice is from Paul Martin’s Deputy Minister of Finance blue-ribbon committee, who this morning called—one of Canada’s most respected economists said in his recommendations that there’s a structural deficit.

John Manley, the Liberal finance minister, said, “The single most important thing you could do to secure the future of the province is to rally your caucus and the population of Ontario behind a declaration....”

“I am proposing a war on the provincial debt.”

Paul Martin, and now we’ve got it from John Manley. These are highly-regarded Liberals—which is a kind of contradiction—but they’re saying right there that there is a problem, and they’re people I pay attention to when I read this stuff. There’s more to it.

I can only continue to say—an open letter here, written by the Canadian Council of Chief Executives. Now, these people are leaders in the economy, if you will. John Manley is the president. Here’s his letter, an open letter. He says that the single most important thing they can do is declare war on the provincial debt.

There’s another, Prospects for Ontario’s Prosperity. Have a look at that report from the competitive task force. There is no credible expert who hasn’t got the same message that our leader, Tim Hudak, is saying: Stop digging; just put the shovels down. Put your hands on the desk and leave things alone. But what they’ve done—they’ve increased spending by over \$1 billion in this budget.

When I look at the pages, I’m starting to feel sorry for them, because they’re spending your future. You think tuition is high now? If Premier McGuinty sticks around, it will be twice what Quebec’s is, and the kids are all upset there.

During the election, there were a few things that surprised me, too. This is quite a good article on the green jobs. What are their strategies? What are the jobs of the future? I put to anyone viewing today, call me. I worked in personnel for 10 years and—what are the jobs of the future? Everybody can’t work for the public sector. I respect and indeed honour the public sector. Nurses, doctors, teachers, environmentalists—the whole group, absolutely critical, including the people who run this place. However, if you have no economy, who’s paying

them? Where does the money come from? Where does the money get generated from? Certainly not in here. We spend money.

Here’s an example: his Green Energy Act, Bill 150. It’s related to this—

Applause.

Mr. John O’Toole: See, there are three members of cabinet here, and they’re all applauding. Well, there’s a case right there. Check your hydro bill. Under McGuinty, it’s tripled. It’s gone up almost 210%. I think it has increased 210% or 205%.

Interjections.

Mr. John O’Toole: The truth is so hard for them to listen to. I’m quoting things here; these are articles, not political stuff. It says, “Dalton’s Mythical Green Jobs.” Listen up: This is an article here on April 15. It’s a recommended reading list. I’ll supply all of them, because they only read the stuff that they’re given to read from the geniuses in the leader’s office.

Interjection.

1430

Mr. John O’Toole: Well, okay.

A couple of things here. This is from the Auditor General’s report, so quit criticizing me when it’s the Auditor General who says this. Here’s what he says: “McCarter concluded: ‘A majority of the jobs’”—in the Green Energy Act—“will be temporary. The (energy) ministry projected that of the 50,000 jobs, about 40,000 would be related to renewable energy. Our review of this projection suggests 30,000, or 75% of these jobs, would be” in construction and would last only a year or two. “The high proportion of short-term jobs was not apparent from the ministry’s announcement.”

Do you know what those jobs will be? You go to a wind turbine, the only jobs there will be somebody driving a lawnmower cutting the grass. The only one on the solar panels will be a guy with a hose washing down the panels. Nobody works there.

Interjection.

Mr. John O’Toole: The former minister of energy and environment, he knows quite a bit. He’s a decent fellow, but the fact is—

Interjection.

Mr. John O’Toole: It’s true. I would say, when I look at the—

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I apologize to the member for Durham, but I have to ask the Attorney General and the member for Ottawa–Orléans to come to order.

I return to the member for Durham.

Mr. John O’Toole: Thank you. I have so little time left. I may seek unanimous consent.

But anyway, here’s another article from the Globe and Mail on April 6. It says “McGuinty’s Magical, Missing Immigration Tax Credit.” This one here is really good. Unbelievable: during the election, they’ve pulled this shell game out; this little game here caused some ruckus. They promised to give employers a tax credit for hiring

new Canadians. Okay? Where is this in the budget? There's not—this is the missing job game. It's on this cynical approach that even the responses here to my informed remarks are less than satisfactory. I've become so upset by this that I—look, the one thing I've wanted—

Mr. Jim Wilson: Give us an Ornge commission.

Mr. John O'Toole: Yeah, we would like a select committee—

Mr. Jim Wilson: To get to the bottom of it all.

Mr. John O'Toole: —to get to the bottom of the scandalous and wasteful spending in health care for eHealth. I see the Minister of Health is here. She promised, when she was here, that she would have the select committee, that she would honour it. We're calling the members here to vote today on having a select committee, on establishing a select committee investigating the scandalous spending on the Ornge helicopters. Unless I get a significant and honest response to this, I move adjournment of the House.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Mr. O'Toole has moved the adjournment of the House. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour of the motion will please say "aye."

All those opposed will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the nays have it.

Call in the members. This will be a 30-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1433 to 1503.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I would ask the members to please take their seats.

Mr. O'Toole has moved the adjournment of the House.

All those in favour of the motion will please rise and be counted by the table staff.

Please take your seats.

All those opposed to the motion will please rise and be counted by the table staff.

You may take your seats.

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 24; the nays are 39.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I declare the motion lost.

The member for Durham still has the floor, and I return—

Mr. John O'Toole: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I just want to put one more piece of factual information on the record. Allan O'Dette, the chair of the Ontario Chamber of Commerce, has put some very relevant comments on the media on the table. What he says here: "The challenges for Ontario"—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Would the member take his seat.

I can't hear the member for Durham. I would ask the House to come to order to allow the Chair to hear the member for Durham.

The Member for Durham.

Mr. John O'Toole: "Thirty-eight per cent of business and civic leaders feel the province is either not that

innovative or not innovative at all." Now, that is an underlying premise in my argument: It's all about jobs and the economy. This is Allan O'Dette, of the chamber of commerce. Do you understand? They get it; you don't get it. On our side, Tim Hudak and the opposition party realize we have to stop spending, especially recklessly.

Mr. Speaker, the points of order have all been raised with respect to the lack willingness of the McGuinty government and the Minister of Health to call a select committee to deal with the Ornge helicopter fiasco, the billion-dollar boondoggle. That's what we're trying to stop here. We want a select committee to deal with this.

I would like all members to familiarize themselves with this document from the chamber. It says here, "Ontario is facing the perfect storm of fiscal pressures. Deficit elimination is a top priority."

Interjection: Six, five, four three, two, one.

Mr. John O'Toole: I seek unanimous consent for more time.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I am going to give the member from Durham more time, because I have twice had to interrupt him because of interjections. Secondly, I would again ask the House not to count down when a member is concluding their remarks. It's extremely disrespectful and leads to disorder.

I'm going to return to the member from Durham and allow him to conclude his remarks.

Mr. John O'Toole: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Within the next 40 minutes, I'll conclude my remarks.

I think this is a very important reference in this time when we're all concerned that there could be an election. What we're saying on this side is this: We need to address the size and cost of government and make it more affordable for investment in Ontario. We have to be competitive. It's about our young people, Mr. Speaker. On jobs and the economy, there's no plan.

We certainly can't support this budget. I'm not certain about the NDP; I think they're waffling. But anyway, thank you for the time.

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

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Well, I want to thank the member—always interesting to listen to my friend the member for—

Interjection: Durham.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Durham. Sorry, I'm terrible with riding names.

He certainly always gives an interesting perspective in whatever debate, and he's certainly not bashful about rising in the House and expressing his views. I just want to make those points.

I just wanted, for the record, to say that this has certainly been an interesting process, yet to be finalized. But I've got to say, in the end, that I will say more when I get to my speech.

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

Hon. John Gerretsen: I want to pick up on a couple of points that the member from Durham made. First of all, the whole question about jobs: We know that the greatest need out there right now is the creation of more jobs in the province of Ontario. Having said that—yeah, that's the real issue; that's what people are concerned about. We've got to get that unemployment rate down. So I can't for the life of me understand, Speaker, since we all basically agree on that, why the opposition party has voted against a continuation of the eastern Ontario development fund and the creation of the southwestern Ontario development fund.

I can tell you that the eastern Ontario development fund has worked extremely well. It has invested some 55 million of our tax dollars in about, let's say, 150 different companies to create a minimum of about 5,000 new jobs in eastern Ontario. It is a program that has worked. It is a program that we truly believe in, on this side of the House. That's why we want to take that same program and put it into southwestern Ontario.

It has worked. I can name for you the companies in my area that have benefited from that, that have grown employment: Metalcraft Industries, Bombardier among others, a high-tech company that makes solar panels etc.

So I would like to ask particularly those Conservative members from eastern Ontario and from southwestern Ontario why they voted against the continuation of the eastern Ontario development fund and why they are against setting up a similar fund in southwestern Ontario, when we all know that that fund has worked extremely well. It has looked after the greatest need in this province, and that is the creation of new, sustainable jobs.

1510

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Before we carry on, I'm going to again remind the members that the questions and comments are supposed to pertain directly to the speech that has just been made.

The member for Thornhill.

Mr. Peter Shurman: Thank you, Speaker. I will endeavour to follow that directive.

I want to congratulate the member from Durham, who I would have to say—

Applause.

Mr. Peter Shurman: And he's applauding very loudly. I want to say that this member is probably the best utility member in this entire House. By utility member, I mean this: He speaks about anything, any time, anywhere for as long as you want, and he knows his subject, as was evidenced by his comments on the budget.

Look, here's the bottom line: What this member demonstrated with the knowledge that he put before us in debate today is what we know to be true of the budget that is in debate. You cannot take a sow's ear and turn it into a silk purse, and that's what would have been required for our party to get behind this budget. You didn't give us anything to work with, so we decided not to work with you. The sooner the people of Ontario understand what it is, what kind of mediocrity we are being faced with when it comes to fiscal reform and fiscal respon-

sibility and fiscal management in the province of Ontario, the better off we'll all be.

Kudos to the third party. They want to keep things alive and want to keep a discussion going. I don't argue with anybody's principles. What I argue with, and what my friend from Durham argues with, is the fact that in the case of this budget, we're not dealing with principles. We're dealing with expediency. We're dealing with a government that puts forward a report like the Drummond report and then picks and chooses like so many cherries off a tree and says, "We like that, but we don't like that," and at the end of the day takes us down a path that will surely lead us to financial ruin, that will lead us to a \$30-billion projected deficit inside of the next four years, that will lead us to untenable debt on the provincial level that we can't afford.

It's that simple, and that's why tomorrow, when the vote comes at noon, this party will stand en masse and vote no.

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

Mr. Michael Prue: I listened with great interest to my friend from Durham, as I always do. I must say, I admire his taste in ties today.

He has worked very hard, as he always does. He knows his subject, although we do not always agree on that on which he speaks. I have to say, we come from diametrically opposed viewpoints on many issues, but he is always well researched and he always comes up, I think, with interesting arguments. His quotes from the chamber of commerce, his quotes from other sources, are always on point and are well made.

I want to comment as well that I was not surprised when he stood up and thought it was an important time to move an adjournment. But he does that in terms of his own desire to have, I think, this House work a little better than it otherwise should. I can understand the frustration that he feels in terms of some of the other issues that he tried to raise and got admonished for by the Chair, by the Speaker, in terms of Ornge and the all-party select committee. But notwithstanding that, I commend him for taking the views that he does.

Now, I know that he has stated and will continue to state and his caucus will continue to state that they will not be supporting the government's budget, and that is what this debate was about. That comes as no surprise. But I also must state that if he wanted to change that budget, there was ample opportunity for members of the official opposition to do that. They chose not to do that. They chose to be obstructive in view of that. So, if there are any changes that come about, they will not come about from anything that they did themselves.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I return to the member for Durham, who has two minutes to reply.

Mr. John O'Toole: I thank the member from Timmins-James Bay. I do await his response. Like my own, they're always relevant.

The Attorney General from Kingston and the Islands, show some respect. You're in cabinet; you know how bad it is. Tell the people of Ontario the truth.

The finance critic from Thornhill—I have the greatest respect. He can speak for an hour because he's used to having his own radio show.

The member from Beaches–East York commented on ties. He has the consummate collection of ties. But I think he did explain the adjournment and the reason I was so frustrated that they wouldn't listen even to the NDP and their critic as well on the Ornge helicopter issue and our member from Aurora, Mr. Klees, and Ms. Witmer and others that have spoken on the issue. Why wouldn't they settle down and have a select committee? What's the problem here? Working together—you always like to use that term.

I just want to sum up by saying clearly for the people who may have been listening: I've tried to cite indisputable evidence that you're on the wrong track. Mr. McCarter's report prior to the election said that you had a structural deficit and he said you can't solve it. Then you commissioned Mr. Drummond—highly regarded, highly respected—and he came up with a treatise on how poorly you're managing the province. If you don't make changes you're going to double the deficit, double the debt, and it's all future taxes for our children. That's the dilemma we're faced with.

In conclusion, I'll read some of the independent editorial pieces. "Ontario's Budget 2011: Not Credible," and it goes on to vilify you. There's the Toronto Star, your briefing papers, "Ontario Given Stark Road Map." All of the articles that I've read—here's the difficulty. I have lost confidence in Premier McGuinty and his finance minister. They lack the discipline, in my view, to make the difficult but necessary decision to make Ontario strong once again. That is why I can't support the budget.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate? I recognize the member for—

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Point of order.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Point of order. The member for Timmins–James Bay.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm just waiting for the mike—there we go. I believe we have unanimous consent that we're going to change the order, by which the Liberal Party will go ahead of us and it will revert back to New Democrats once the Liberals have done their 20 minutes and 10 minutes for questions and comments.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Is there unanimous consent to allow the New Democrats and the government side to exchange their opportunities to speak and trade them equally? Agreed? Agreed.

The member for Ottawa–Orléans.

Mr. Phil McNeely: Thank you, Speaker. It's a pleasure to rise in this House to speak to the budget. I'd like to start off with: We've heard a lot about how—

Hon. Margaret R. Best: Sharing your time.

Mr. Phil McNeely: I'm sharing my time with the member for—

Interjection: York West.

Mr. Phil McNeely: For York West. I think I've mentioned that.

I'd like to start off with a couple of quotes. "The challenge for this government in this budget was to provide a credible repair plan.... And so it has. It has provided a broad-based plan—detailed, strategic—that they hope will keep them on the deficit reduction track even with more moderate growth." That was Mary Webb, senior economist of Scotiabank.

I'd also like to quote from Janet Ecker. "To get there, the government is making some tough but necessary choices." Janet Ecker, president, Toronto Financial Service Alliance.

A third quote: "And while we have questions about some of the individual items, we strongly support their efforts to eliminate the deficit. It is an important step for Ontario's future economic growth and will help support continued growth of financial service jobs in the province." Janet Ecker, president, Toronto Financial Services Alliance.

I think there have been a lot of discussions about the five-year plan that we have proposed. The slash-and-burn alternative was not one that we have chosen. We have chosen a good plan that takes us, by 2017-18, to a balanced budget, and that is extremely important.

I think that if we go back to 2003, we can see the impacts of a slash-and-burn approach. We did have a major economic downturn in 2009 where we lost 300,000 jobs in the manufacturing sector. Many issues made 2009-10 very difficult years for this province. We have to build out of that major recession. We have to do better than the European economies, who are really struggling, and the US, which is really struggling. We have had a good record of job production in Ontario, a lot, I think, due to having supported the HST when we had to. It was a difficult decision for our government a couple of years ago to bring in the HST. Governments had tried it before and had run into difficulty, but we did it successfully and it is paying off in job creation now—46,000 jobs created in Ontario in the last month. So we're going in the right direction.

1520

If you look back at the option to a five-year plan which is going to slowly get us out of the deficit to a balanced budget—a strong five-year plan where we're going to respect all the contributors to this great province, where we're going to do it in a reasonable fashion. We can look back at what happened when we closed hospitals, when we closed schools, when we didn't invest in infrastructure. Certainly, in 2003, when we took over, that was the time that we had to rebuild our energy infrastructure. We had to rebuild our schools, had to rebuild our hospitals which had been closed. We had to rebuild our universities and colleges, and so we have done that over the years.

If you look at some of the decisions that have made Ontario a much better province—full-day kindergarten. It's extremely important. Full-day kindergarten is something that was looked at as something we should take out of our spending.

I have a grandchild now and he started in full-day kindergarten in grade 3. Logan goes to school not far

from where we live. When we go by there, that's his school. He's now in his second year of full-day kindergarten and will be going into grade 1 next year. This little guy already speaks French. It's just amazing. He went to Ecole élémentaire catholique Arc-en-ciel in Orléans. It's his school. His brother's coming along, and when we go by that school, the brother, who's three, says, "That's my school, too." They have a little arguments over that, but they're very proud of that school. He'll be starting there. These are some of the things we've done over the last two years.

One of the things I'm proudest of in what Ontario has done and continues to do: We're getting out of coal. We'll be out of coal in 2014. We're going to be the first government that I know of in the world that has gotten out of coal. Even now, we see that coal is being promoted to provide energy to the oil sands out west, a new coal plant which will keep spewing carbon dioxide into the air for the next 50 years. We got out of coal. It was an expensive thing to do. The people in Ontario have been very supportive of us getting out of coal, and that is just wonderful.

Another thing that we're keeping in this budget, very important and it helps poorer families, is the Ontario child benefit. Those are important dollars that flow to those parents who need it, based on each child. It's over \$1,000 a year. I think it's at \$1,100 and it's going to go up another \$100. That, in itself, is something that's very important to help take children out of poverty.

I have to commend the Liberal women's caucus for doing the right things in many issues. They have brought issues forward and it's become the law of the land. That's part of our budget, and I really have to congratulate them, that they have stuck to the important things and have made Ontario much better as a result.

The Smoke-Free Ontario Act—we got that going in Ontario. In Ottawa, when I was there from 2000-03—it continues to be a very important part of our government, of what we want to do. I was at an event this morning, representing the minister, which was just congratulating young people who had broken the habit. It was wonderful to see that that's continuing, and we are getting away from that terrible scourge. Some of those dollars still flow to the Ontario Cancer Society from the province for programs like that.

Banning the cosmetic use of pesticides was something that has been very important since we brought it in in 2003. That's something that has been well accepted by Ontarians and has decreased the rates of some of the diseases for kids. It was an important decision to make. We could never get that as part of the legislation in Ottawa. But here in the province, we were able to get that through, and so now the whole province has the same legislation, again, banning the cosmetic use of pesticides.

Smaller class sizes have been argued as something that we could take out of our spending this year. Smaller class sizes are extremely important, and that has shown up throughout the measurements of how good our education system is. We are now the leader in the English world

and in the top five in the world in education systems, and that's certainly part of it.

The higher graduation rates are another result of putting those extra dollars into education and keeping those people in our high schools, where there's early intervention, where these kids have an opportunity if they have technical strengths that aren't showing up under the old system. We've taken the percentage of graduation from high school from 68% to 83%, and we have almost 100,000 kids that have graduated from high schools that would not have, under the old system.

These are things we have to keep. These are extremely important to us, and we can't go back on that.

We have the lowest surgeries in the country, and we can't start taking money out of health care on a big scale and closing hospitals, as was done in the 1990s. That was not fair to the people of Ontario. That was not the right way to do it.

I'll just go back. I forgot and wanted to mention that if we had taken the full-day kindergarten out; if we had gone back to the old class sizes; if we had taken all those people out without early intervention and helping the kids in school, we could have saved a lot of dollars, but it would have been 20,000 teachers and teachers assistants, and other personnel that are in schools, out on the streets at the wrong time. I think people cautioned us against that approach. We know that's not a good approach. We have to keep people working. We're going to have to negotiate hard to make sure we can save those things in the system.

Renewal of infrastructure was obviously a big job that we had to do, starting in 2003. So there's a strong, robust, three-year plan to continue with infrastructure under Minister Chiarelli. That is important. We have to keep the construction jobs there as well. We have to keep renewing our infrastructure. That's a big part of our economic future.

We uploaded billions of dollars from the municipalities. That was a problem that resulted from downloading which occurred in the 1990s. We had promised the municipalities in our memorandum of agreement to continue the uploading of those dollars, and we have, and we're going to. I think that's the type of thing that—we have to encourage our municipalities, who are in difficult times as we are.

Green energy has been something that is very important to me. I think that's where we have to go. We have to be concerned with the environment. Coal is gone. We have to promote renewables; it is creating jobs. A lot of people know now about conservation through the smart meters and all that. That whole program—I was very pleased to be part of that when it came in. I think it's extremely important that we continue to do that as we go forward.

I think that we've come up with a budget which is a budget that we can go forward with, that takes us to a balanced budget by 2017-18. We're maintaining those very important aspects of conservation, of education, of health care. This is where we have to be at. It's going to

be tough. It's not going to be easy for anyone. The five years that MPPs won't get a salary increase: That's fair. We're going to have to deal with all our teachers and groups etc. But if everybody takes up their part, then that will be fair.

If I give up speaking now, then the other member will have his part. Thank you very much, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): The member for York West.

Mr. Mario Sergio: Thank you very much, Speaker. I'm very pleased to have the next few minutes and make some remarks on the budget that, hopefully, this House will be dealing with tomorrow, and we'll have already been done by this particular time, hopefully. And why not?

I think the direction that we have presented in this budget follows exactly what the Premier and we were saying during the election last year. We have addressed ourselves on the main things that are of interest to the people of Ontario; that is, health care, education and creating jobs, Speaker, and I think the budget reflects all of that.

1530

In the meantime, of course, we all know that we had the so-called Drummond report recommending a number of things. We did say that without touching those very important issues such as education, health care, and job creation programs—and social services, I should add as well, Speaker—we will be managing to balance the budget for the years that we have said: 2017-18. Therefore, we are here today addressing, very much, the content of the budget that is in front of us today.

We have heard from the opposition. The Conservatives decided, even before they had a chance to read the budget, that they would be voting against it. I have to say that Premier McGuinty did extend to the opposition leaders the opportunity to come forward with their proposals—and we would be listening. The Premier, I think, did listen. Unfortunately, the Conservatives decided not to support it. Therefore, they chose not to sit at the table and come up with any proposals, reasonable or otherwise.

Instead, with the NDP, we have seen that they have been negotiating all along, almost on a daily basis. We have seen a number of proposals.

I hope that common sense, if I can put it that way, Speaker, will prevail and we will have the budget approved by tomorrow at this time. We all are going to be winners. The people of Ontario are going to be winners.

This is no time to throw Ontario into an unwanted election. Never mind when we say, "We have to put more money into programs"—and why not—and then we say, six months after an election, "Let's go and splash another \$100 million or more into another election." According to the mood of the people out there, not only don't they want an election—I don't think it's necessary—but it may cause to deliver exactly the same terms and conditions that we see today. I wonder if it's really all worth it.

I think all of us should look at our own pride and say, "As much as, maybe, we should do certain things for the benefit of the people of Ontario, it is not the time to go into an election." We have to look around, Speaker. We know that news comes to us from all sides, internally and externally; through the radio, newspapers, from our neighbours in the south, the Europeans—there are troubles all over the place. And you know what? We are so thankful that we are living in a country which has been managing its affairs in, I would say, an extremely good manner. It's the envy of the world.

In Ontario, Speaker, we are not privy to the situation that is going around in the world. We have to look at the economic situation in the face, as it is. We are suffering some of the consequences. I have to say that we are lucky with the way we have been able to manage the economy and our affairs today. Sure, we have some deficits; they will be paid. We have to share a little bit of the pain, and I think it's quite fair.

I think our cost of living, our way of living, is excellent. I think we should be very proud of the way we are conducting ourselves, the opportunities that we have in Ontario, especially for our young people.

If the Premier has incorporated in the budget the fact that we want to maintain the education system as we did say we would, I think we should be proud that we have maintained that particular promise in the budget.

The 30% tuition cut, I think, speaks for itself. It's helping not only our students in college and universities, but I think it's doing wonderful things for parents as well.

Full-day kindergarten, with all due respect to the opposition and even the Drummond report: Yes, it costs money, but then, Speaker, we are talking about the future of our children—the future of our children. We can't find anyone that says it's money thrown into the wind—absolutely not. It is doing great for families, especially young families with young kids going to school. By the time, in a year or two, full-day kindergarten is throughout the province, in every school, then every family will be really that much ahead because they will be saving about \$6,400 or \$6,500 per kid—per kid. They will have to worry just about doing their own thing, going to work, without having difficulties looking after the kids.

On the job side, I think we have seen what is coming from the rest of the world, and we have to say that we have created over 340,000 jobs. And in the last month alone—I mean this wasn't us; it was the Canadian government announcing the number of jobs created in Canada. Ontario was leading the way with 46,000 new jobs in the month of March. Speaker, I think this speaks well for the economy in the province and I think we should be proud. We should be proud to speak on behalf of our province of Ontario, for the people—day and night, I have to say, because we have lots of people working night shifts. I think we should be lauding those people because they are committed to the progress and strengthening of the economy of Ontario.

So, Speaker, I hope by tomorrow we can all rally around and say—you know what?—we've got to keep on

going. We've got to keep our province strong. We have to make sure that our health care is provided.

Speaker, I don't have the time, but I would love to read you the list of hospitals that we are looking to get under way.

Mr. Jeff Leal: You've got a minute. Give us the list.

Mr. Mario Sergio: Some of them are already started: Cambridge, Burlington, Wellington–Halton Hills, Perth–Wellington, Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke, Elgin–Middlesex, Leeds–Grenville.

Look at the transit area: Burlington—

Mr. Jeff Leal: Markdale.

Mr. Mario Sergio: Which one was yours?

Mr. Jeff Leal: Markdale; is it on the list?

Mr. Mario Sergio: Yes, it's there. I don't have the full list because it's too long. With all of that we have a big discussion, LRTs or subways—\$8.4 billion. I mean, this is the taxpayers' money. This is to create jobs for Ontario, and we will. I'm blessed in my area: There is the Finch LRT. If we get the LRT or the subway, I'm happy both ways because it helps the local economy. It helps the economy in Ontario. It's good for the people in my riding. It's good for the people of Ontario. Thank you, Speaker.

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

Mrs. Julia Munro: I just want to use my time to make a couple of comments, particularly around those that the member from Ottawa–Orléans began with. When he talked about the hospitals, I immediately thought of the two major hospitals that serve my riding, which under a Progressive Conservative government undertook a massive expansion, which, I want to add, was continued by the current government. So when we're talking about hospital building and hospital updating, I don't think that either party can take a back seat.

The other issue that the member raised—or one of them—was the pride which he had over Smoke-Free Ontario. Well, I guess I would wish that he would also take on the contraband tobacco issue with the same kind of enthusiasm, because as he is talking about how youth are being discouraged from smoking and how wonderful this is, on the other side of the road, quite frankly, everywhere across this province, youth are able to access tobacco without any rules, without any opportunity for—frankly, if there is such a thing—a safe cigarette. It's certainly contributing to the growth of young smokers.

He talked about the economy, and I guess there are three things that come to my mind: first of all, the fact that we have a \$15.3-billion deficit that is only going to grow under this budget. We have 500,000 people that are unemployed in this province today. The third number is the \$10-billion cost of servicing the debt—the debt itself is approaching \$400 million. Those three numbers make it impossible to support this budget.

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

Ms. Cindy Forster: I'd like to thank the members from York West and Ottawa–Orléans for their comments. I know we don't always agree on some of those comments, but I certainly believe in freedom of speech and the democratic process.

I had the opportunity on Friday, when we left here last week, to go to a poverty forum in my riding, hosted by one of the local churches. It was well attended by approximately 50 people on a Friday evening. So people gave up from 5 o'clock till 9 o'clock on a Friday evening to discuss poverty in my community. The pastors from the church and members of the parish were there, and there were people from community programs, all there to talk about poverty and the ever-growing number of people who are finding themselves in poverty in our communities.

The churches told me that they can't keep up. Just about every church in the community has a food bank, in addition to the Salvation Army and people who just provide shelters and food banks. They can't keep up continuing to be the last resort not only for people on ODSP and Ontario Works, but for the working poor who are living in our communities and having to rely on food banks to feed their families.

I think that's an important piece that we need to be doing better on as a province, and we need to be finding ways to actually support these people in our communities.

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

Mr. Bill Mauro: Speaker, I want to thank the member for York West and the member for Ottawa–Orléans for their comments on the budget motion today.

I do want to begin by acknowledging that today is Prostate Cancer Awareness Day here in the Legislature. We're all wearing the ties and scarves to honour the great work that goes on. I will give a nod to the group in Thunder Bay that is presided by Phil Junnila. My father was one of the original members of the group in Thunder Bay. They do great work in terms of raising funds, awareness and support. I want to thank the local group in Thunder Bay as well as the rest of them across the province that continue to advocate on this particular issue. I'm proud to be wearing the tie today.

When we talk about the budget—I had an opportunity to speak about this a bit last week as well—I frame it for the people of Ontario who are interested in this issue. And there are many who are, given the discussions I'm having in my riding of Thunder Bay–Atikokan about what is at risk and what we've chosen to protect in this budget document. I like to speak primarily about a couple of things, health care and education, which we know most people in the province see as their two first priorities when it comes to the expenditure of provincial dollars.

Right now, we know there are negotiations going on with the medical community and the education sector, but I can't help but remind people that today in Ontario there are 8,500 to 10,000 more teachers working in our

schools than there were when we came to government in 2003. And in spite of Drummond's recommendations, we've decided to go forward with full-day kindergarten and maintain smaller class sizes. Do you know who benefits most from those two decisions besides the students and the parents?

Mr. Jeff Leal: Teachers.

Mr. Bill Mauro: Teachers, but I would say even more specifically to my friend from Peterborough, it's young teachers. Those jobs are the ones those young people graduating from faculties of education are moving into. It's tough times, and we're doing the best we can in a number of sectors. But that decision in our budget speaks volumes to our commitment to education and health care as well.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): We have time for one last question or comment.

Mr. John O'Toole: I'm pleased to respond to the members from Ottawa-Orléans and York West. I think they really missed the mark here, the opportunity to declare their concern for the future prosperity of Ontario.

Most of the information you see that's not imbued with political spin on it—you'll find out that there's a structural deficit in the province of Ontario. You'll find out you have a Premier and a Minister of Finance who don't recognize that they can't increase spending faster than you can increase revenue. This is what they call a structural deficit.

After being here 17 years, I can say this: The real role of the government is to say "no" at the appropriate time for the appropriate reason, really. Any fool and his money can soon be parted. It's important to say "yes" to many things; I would say that. But at the same time, you shouldn't be more or less buying votes. These various polling things that they do, and they find out which group they can move. That was the new Canadian tax credit they had during the election, which was cancelled. The NDP put out something on the table about a tax credit for job creation, similar to what Bob Rae did in 1994.

I've watched for some time. I find out that I'm becoming a bit cynical, because doing the right thing is often difficult, and I think that's what Don Drummond said.

I know Mr. McNeely is an engineer. He knows that there's a shortfall in infrastructure in the economy of Ontario. The infrastructure is important to build Ontario. The member from York also recognized—she has been here for a long time.

The real issue I'm pleading with you in your response is to address how you're going to fix the problem. If the economy doesn't pick up, are we imitating Greece or Italy? What's the plan here? What's the plan B? Plan A doesn't work, clearly. What's plan B?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Thank you very much. I look to the government, and the member for York West has two minutes to respond.

Mr. Mario Sergio: I'm very pleased to have heard the comments from the members from Durham, from York-Simcoe and from Welland as well.

The member from Welland was addressing her remarks to having attended a meeting with respect to families and churches and discussing people, low-income families in poverty. I think this is one of the things that we have been addressing in the past eight years as a government, and we keep addressing the same issues in the budget as well, without losing sight, if you will, Speaker, of the pillars that we have always said were in our economic and social economy here: health care, jobs and education.

We have not cut social services. We are still maintaining the same \$100 and \$110 for low-income mothers to assist them, which is \$1,100 and is going to go to \$1,300 a year, come next year. So we haven't cut any of those services.

We still want to keep full-day kindergarten. We still want to make sure that we make it affordable for college and university kids to go to school and learn. We want to give them the opportunity to face the competition that comes not only from within, from our neighbours, but from without. We want to make sure that our young kids will have the best education to face the competition that we are facing in the new world, if you will. We may want to bury our heads in the sand, but this is our reality, Speaker. We have a lot of pressure from all over the world, and unless today we give the opportunity to our young kids, to teach and face that competition, we will be left behind.

We have done—my time is up. Thank you, Speaker, for the time allowed.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Thank you very much.

Hon. John Milloy: Point of order.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I recognize the government House leader on a point of order.

Hon. John Milloy: Mr. Speaker, I think you'll find there's unanimous consent that the House suspend until 4:15 p.m. and that the clock on the budget debate be stopped until the House resumes at 4:15 p.m.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): The government House leader has asked if there's unanimous consent in the House to suspend the proceedings until 4:15 and stop the clock on the budget debate until 4:15. Agreed? Agreed.

As such, this House is suspended until 4:15.

The House suspended proceedings from 1549 to 1615.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate? I recognize the member for Timmins-James Bay.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Members will be aware that just recently our leader, Andrea Horwath, had a press conference here at Queen's Park and talked about the details of what was achieved as a result of a pretty hard process that we had to go through in order to try to get some compromises on the provincial budget.

I just want to say from the outset that this is not the budget that I would have written. It's not the budget that Andrea Horwath or any of our members would have written. We think this budget still has some issues that,

quite frankly, are difficult to deal with. But our job here is about making Parliament work and Parliament is about compromise, especially in the time of a minority Parliament. In a time of majority, the government can do what it wants and essentially listen to the opposition make the points. Sometimes we're successful in bending what they do, but in the case of a minority Parliament, that responsibility that we have as opposition parties is much more serious—I wouldn't say much more serious, but the responsibility that we have, we must take much more seriously in a sense of making sure that this Parliament works.

Listen, life is not about easy choices. I want to say that at the outset. The government tabled a motion that New Democrats and Conservatives were unhappy with. The Conservatives decided on their strategy. I won't even touch it, but that is their choice. I'm sure that they had deliberations on how to get there. But we decided on a different track. We thought, as New Democrats, that people sent us here in order to try to get something done. We looked at this opportunity that was presented by way of the budget as, "What can we do in order to be here and to work for the people of Ontario?" Because all of us—I'm not saying that we, as New Democrats, have a monopoly on it—here in this Legislature are here to do the people's work.

That is what drove Andrea Horwath, that is what drove this caucus, that is what drove the process that we went through. Was it easy? Absolutely not. It was rather difficult because we had to wrestle with a number of questions. Number one: What we would put on the table? I'm going to talk about that in a second. Once we put it on the table and the government showed resistance, to which point are we willing to compromise in order to get an agreement? And sure, you know what? I'd love to get a whole bunch of things in life. There's a whole bunch of things that I would like, but sometimes you've got to do what's in the realm of possibility, and some fights will have to continue. I will talk about that in a minute.

We went through a process, as a caucus, where we said, "Listen, where does the budget fall short?" We said, "Well, when it comes to fairness, clearly, this budget doesn't do that." We felt that the budget, as presented, essentially put the onus of trying to balance the books over the next number of years on a certain class of people, working-class people and the poor. We thought the people at the top were getting off pretty scot-free. There's a real sense in our society—not only here in Ontario, but I think around the world; you see it in France and other countries as things develop. There's a sense that we were plunged into a recession, almost an economic meltdown, because there are certain people at the top who took advantage of the situation and gamed the system, as we saw in the United States, with a lot of the dealings of some of the financial institutions there and others around the world. The response was that we couldn't let them fail. Remember that old comment: "They're so big, these companies; you can't make them fail"? The taxpayers across the world were asked to pony

up and put money out of their wallets in order to allow these people who caused the problem to survive. There was going to be, people thought, a quid pro quo. People thought, "Well, if I do that, certainly to God now they're going to learn a lesson and maybe I'll be in a better place." What we learned at the end of the process is that these guys are making more money than they ever have before, and on the taxpayers' dime.

What we said was, "Listen; enough is enough. We need to some way show that all of us are in this together." So, the first thing we did and we put forward in the last election, as we did after the October 6 vote, we said, "We think there should be a freeze on corporate tax." We think giving another reduction to taxes to the corporations is the wrong way to go, because quite frankly, we don't think it gets results. Also, it sends the wrong signal: Why should the corporation get a tax cut and the person on welfare or ODSP is told that they get a freeze? Why should somebody get a tax cut when women and men are trying to get daycare for their children and they're not able to get a daycare spot etc.? The government heeded that call, and I give the government some credit. They decided to put that initially in the budget.

1620

But we didn't think it went far enough, and that's why we put forward the idea that at the very least there should be a two-point surtax on income over \$500,000. And do you know what? Most people agreed with us. It didn't matter if it was voters who normally vote Conservative, New Democrat or Liberal. People said, "Hey, that's fair. Why should it just be the people at the bottom that pay, and why should it not be the people at the top that are part of the solution?"

We made it a condition of this discussion that we've had with the government—I won't call them negotiations, because they were not negotiations, quite frankly; they were discussions, which is a whole other thing.

We said to the government, through our discussions—I had a series of meetings with the government House leader, along with the two chiefs of staff. I'd like to say good things about Gissel Yanez in regard to the work she did leading up to this, along with myself, and also Chris Morley, from the Premier's office. We made that point. We said, "Listen, we want you to be really clear: If you do not move in a significant way on that issue and others that we have put on the table, we don't want an election but we are certainly prepared to go there."

I give Andrea Horwath great credit for holding to her guns and saying, "You know what? It is a condition." This caucus decided collectively that there were some conditions that we had to have met in order to be able to move forward, and the 2% surtax on \$500,000 was key amongst them, because we believe that allows other things to happen.

I must stand and applaud our leader. Our leader did an amazing job at working this through, always remembering, "It's not about me. It's not about my political fortune. It's about doing what's right for the people who sent us here collectively." And I have to say, she is a very

well thought, well reasoned person, because she always kept her eye on that. Whenever we would get a sense, on the team that dealt with this, that maybe we should go in a different direction, Andrea was always very good at saying, "Remember why we're here. We're here to do the people's work." I've got to say, it is certainly a refreshing way to do politics. After 20-some-odd years in this Legislature, I am reinvigorated on the leadership that Andrea has provided.

Interjection.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Well, one day it will happen, my friend. It will happen. I won't repeat the heckle.

The point I make is that there are a number of things I would like to have seen that should have been contained in the agreement, and we will continue pushing for those. But I just want to talk a little bit about what was achieved.

The government agreed in the end to a 2% surtax on those people over \$500,000. I think it looks good on all of us, not just New Democrats, to do that. And I urge members, when that bill comes forward, because it will be a separate bill, that we vote together on that particular aspect.

We have found a reprieve of a type for the horse racing industry that we think is important. Is it a save? No. I'm going to be very clear. It is an opportunity for the horse racing industry to sit with government in a process that allows them to figure how to get to the next step, and that next step will have to be defined by that process. But that was a win.

I only wish the government would have had the same largesse when it came to the Ontario Northland and the ONTC. I just want to say for the record now: You think we dropped that one? No way, man. Northerners, we're going to fight for that to the end, and we think we've set the conditions by which it can be done, because the government now has better than half a billion dollars in new revenue, and nobody in northern Ontario and nobody in this province is going to accept, now that we've created the ability to have half a billion dollars, that some of that—\$24 million is all it takes to continue the subsidy to the ONTC.

We said at the table, "Listen, we understand your problem is capital at this point, and maybe what we need to do is take a pause on capital for a year or two and allow things to unfold." If the economy turns around, which it will, we'll then be in a position to invest in Ontario Northland infrastructure, as we do with GO Transit, as we do in Toronto with the TTC and with all the other transits across this province, and as we do when it comes to building freeways and highways in this province. We think that was reasonable.

The government had a different view. They said, "Well, we don't see the ONTC as infrastructure for transportation in northern Ontario the way you do." I love the words of Andrea Horwath, who said to the Premier, "Premier, at one time you used to get it. You understood that the Ontario Northland was part of the transportation infrastructure, and it was good public policy to make sure

that that infrastructure worked. And, yes, it's better for the environment. What happened to you?" For whatever reason, the Premier is deciding not to bend on this one.

I just want to say again for the record: All northern members—never mind northern members; all northerners—are going to continue pushing on that one, because this battle isn't over. There is an ability now, because of what we created with the \$550 million that you get by way of this surtax, to be able to find \$24 million to allow that railway to continue.

We got a huge concession from the government when it comes to the people who are most hard hit in our province, and that's people on ODSP and welfare. The government said, "You know what? We're just going to freeze you." We said that is not acceptable. Enough that people were cut back 24% some years ago under the Harris government and that they were frozen for a time. Freezing them essentially puts them further and further back, putting the pressure for government in the future to put even more in. Even Don Drummond agreed with that principle when he talked about what he did inside his report.

That was a huge win. We got the government to agree that a 1% ODSP and a 1% OW increase was blatantly fair and that we do that as a way of moving to the next step, which is what's going to come out of the Lankin report, and we look forward to seeing what solutions are going to be brought forward when it comes to finding ways to make that system work people better for those people on it.

When it comes to daycare, we are going through a transformation in this province because of what's happening with the creation of full-time JK. I've got to say, where I come from, we've had full-time JK, God, since the time my children went to school—and our children are now in their 30s—so it's not a new concept for us in Timmins and other communities in my riding. But for many people in Ontario, this is a big thing. Moving to full-time junior kindergarten is a big thing, but it creates a problem because the daycare operators, especially the not-for-profits, lose those kids who would normally be in their daycares and who are now going to be in classrooms.

So there needs to be some sort of transition. We put a proposal on the table, and the government initially came back and said they were going to shuffle the deck around. When we figured that out, we said, "No, it's got to be new money." The government gave us—I forget the exact numbers, but it's like \$70 million, \$80 million or \$90 million of brand new money over the next three years to allow that transition to happen and to assist those daycares so that they don't have to close their doors.

I would venture to say that if Andrea Horwath and New Democrats didn't push for that, we would have more daycare closures in this province and that would not be a good thing because I believe daycares are an important way of not only supporting parents getting to work and making sure their kids have a good place, I think it's also an economic development tool when you look at it from that perspective.

We then pushed on the issue of small and rural hospitals. The government is going through a transformation in health care. We sat at the table, myself directly and Mrs. Yanez, to both Mr. Morley and the government House leader, that when it comes to what's going on in health care we agree that we need to put more money into community services. People want to stay at home. They don't want to go to hospital and institutions if they don't have to. The problem is that there's not enough support in the community to make that happen.

My sister, who has just found out that she has breast cancer and has to now go through radiation and chemotherapy, is going to need support so she can continue living alone at home and have the supports she needs as she goes through these treatments. In communities that's hard to do because our CCACs are rationing the amount of hours because there's not enough money in the pot to provide the services necessary so people like my sister can live at home with dignity.

Those I think are good choices. We pushed the government towards that end. They've agreed to continue and put some money into that so that we can make sure we have—I think it's going to work out to three million more hours of home care that's going to be provided to the people of Ontario, and that's going to go a long ways, because in my CCAC alone, I believe, if I remember correctly, we need about a \$10-million infusion in our CCAC for the northeast to be able to meet just the basic needs that are being brought forward now. I think those three million hours will help us get partway there. It's a step in the right direction.

But the problem is that as we move people from institutions into home services, there's also going to be a transformation, a reduction of budgets at hospitals to make that happen. We said, "Whoa, hang on a second. You can't rob from Peter to pay Paul." There's got to be some sort of stability for hospitals, especially small rural hospitals and northern hospitals, so that they don't have to lose their emergency services or lose their acute care beds in ridings like those of my friend across the way from Thunder Bay—Superior North, myself and Mr. Vanthof from Timiskaming—Cochrane, because that's what was going to happen.

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I have been talking to the hospitals in my riding. Timmins and District Hospital, which is the largest hospital, is being told, "You're going to be flatlined to 1% this year," and that's going to represent about a \$6-million cut to their budget. At the same time, they're going to essentially freeze the budgets of the smaller rural hospitals in my riding—Smooth Rock Falls, Kapuskasing, Hearst, Moosonee, Moose Factory, the James Bay area. That's going to mean to say that the rationing of services in those hospitals would have closed things—in Smooth Rock Falls, possibly the emergency room. I'll tell you, the mayor of Smooth Rock Falls, along with the director of the hospital and others, are very concerned that that's where the local LHIN is going.

We've provided an additional \$20 million by way of this agreement so hospitals like Smooth Rock Falls are

able to adjust somewhat their budgets so that they can keep an emergency room open or make sure they don't lose too many acute care beds and to do what needs to be done so we don't end up having small rural hospitals shut their doors in order to do this transformation. I would just add that if you're doing a reduction of services in those areas, everybody's going to go to Timmins, and they're not going to have the money to do it. We need that transition fund in order to make sure that that happens.

We worked hard to get to where we're at now. I just want to say that it is, as in every process, a difficult one. It wasn't easy. It was like literally I've been camped here for about two or three weeks, not being able to get home, because we've had discussions almost every day and on the weekend either with the government or amongst ourselves and then back with the government in order to get to the point that essentially we're at now.

We will allow the government to move forward with their motion tomorrow. How we do that, we'll tell you a little bit later. But I want the government to be clear: This is still a Liberal budget that has some flaws in it. We will do what we have to do to fight for the people that we represent across this province to make sure that we don't fall further behind on some of the issues that I think need to be dealt with.

I think we've created a great opportunity with the \$500 million that will be available as a result of the surtax on people earning over \$500,000. It will allow us to make the fight to say to the government, and I think it's very reasonable one—\$24 million is all we need to save the train. Right? It's not a lot of money.

We're prepared as northerners to roll up our sleeves and say, "Okay, we get it. There have got to be better ways to run that train," so we can make it more efficient. There's nobody at the ONTC, there's not a union member, a management person, a local mayor or a citizen in northern Ontario who doesn't understand that efficiencies always have to be found to make things run better. We understand that the government has a capital problem when it comes to—they've been putting in \$100 million a year—that's their choice, and it's a good one—up until this year to improve the capital on the rail and the buses and others at the ONTC. We're saying: Take a break for a year or two. You don't have to do the capital all at once. We can live what we've got for the next year or two to allow us to figure out how we position the ONTC so it remains intact.

I just want to end on this point because I have two minutes and I raised it in question period today. What members of the government need to understand is that once you remove the subsidy and divest the assets of the ONTC, the buses will continue to run, the ferry service will continue to run, but the train is gone. There's nobody who's going to buy the train. Mike Harris tried this and had to retreat. Why? Because even CN wouldn't be paid to take it—not because it was a bad thing, but there needs to be a subsidy to run it. It's just the reality of life. GO Transit gets a subsidy, Via Rail—everybody. There's not a train service in the world that runs without a subsidy.

Here's the kicker: If you allow that train to go down, every sawmill, every paper mill and every mine along that railway is put at risk. Why? They are hanging on by the skin of their teeth as it is now—Columbia Forest Products, Lecours Lumber, Tembec and others. When you say, "We're no longer going to allow you to ship by rail because we're going to force you to go to roads," it increases their bottom line. The minister who used to be the minister—well, actually still is—the minister of forestry understands this. It will increase the cost of these operations, and some of them will close.

We can't afford to have more closures in northern Ontario. This is an essential part of the infrastructure of this province in order to be able to run not only people up and down the rail but to run our economy.

So I say to the government members: You haven't heard the last of us on the ONTC, because I can tell you, we will still fight for that. At the end of the day, we will win, because ultimately the position we are taking is reasonable. We gave you \$500 million. All the north wants back is \$24 million, and we'll talk about how we make that railway a better place and a better operation for everybody.

With that, I'd like to conclude debate and say that there will be many more opportunities to have these kinds of discussions in the future. This, I think, shows that when we roll up our sleeves and work together, we can make Parliament work.

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

Mr. Jeff Leal: I really appreciate the comments made by the member from Timmins–James Bay. I get to work with the member in a number of capacities, and there's no question that his party brought a number of key issues to the table in order to improve and enhance the budget document and the budget approach, the fiscal framework that we presented at the end of March.

Not a long time ago, from 1975 to 1981, during a period of minority government that was led by one of Ontario's most distinguished Premiers, Mr. Davis—over that period of time, there were six consensus budgets that were presented to Ontario at that particular time, during that six-year minority government period. If you take the time, Mr. Speaker—and you probably have—to go back and look at those budgets and look at the budget debate during that particular time, there was a lot of give and take from all corners of the House during that six-year period. Of course, such things as rent control were brought in as part of those budget packages.

Certainly, when I was consulting with my constituents just recently during our constituency week, their message was pretty clear to me: that the people of Ontario had made a decision last October. We have a minority government, and it's incumbent upon us all, on all sides of the House, to do our bit and show our leadership, collectively and individually, to make this minority government work.

Certainly, this afternoon, a final package was put into place—not a perfect package, but a package indeed. It'll

allow us to continue to work on all sides of the House over the next number of weeks and months to come on behalf of all Ontarians, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Bill Walker: First and foremost, I'd like to extend to my colleague from Timmins–James Bay, and through him to his sister, our thoughts and best wishes to his sister, who was recently diagnosed with breast cancer. It's something we can all relate to, and we wish her all the very best.

I regard Mr. Bisson from Timmins–James Bay very highly. He has been here for a lot of years, and certainly they came together and they propped up the budget. I don't think that was unexpected by many people across our province and certainly not across our caucus.

The challenge that I see still—and it's why there is a fundamental divide—is, it's yet another tax, really, at the end of the day. It's going to be more spending. It's going to be trading horses to be able to get more money for their areas. You know what? That's the right thing for many people to do, to fight for their constituencies. But at the end of the day, they've added another tax. Whether it's to the wealthy or to the poor, it's still a tax, and it's still something else that people weren't looking for.

Fundamentally, I've got some friends whom I've had that discussion with, who are in that bracket. They said, "Why do you keep coming to me, who create the jobs, who are always the first in line when you go to build the new hospital or the new school or the new library? You come to the wealthy and ask me for the \$100,000 and the \$500,000 gift." If we tax them too high and they start moving, we're going to have a fundamental challenge in our province.

Why do we always look for more rather than restraint? One of our fundamental premises and our concern with this budget is, where is the restraint of spending? Where's the clawing back and saying, "We can't be all things"?

He talked about the train at length. Again, from a rural community, I can understand transportation needs and the issues, but subsidies and the mentality of always having lots of subsidies is only going to get us where we are today: a \$15.3-billion deficit, a \$400-billion debt. We're going to soon have more money in debt than the federal party, the whole Confederation. We can't continue to go there.

What if they hadn't wasted the \$3 billion? Think of the money we would have had then for the train service and other services we want. Speaker, \$15.3 billion—we can't continue to go there.

We still stand opposed to where they were heading—both parties—to spend, spend, spend.

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

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: Let's make this one point clear: This is not our budget. It will never be our budget. But what we tried to do is inject a little bit of fairness into this budget.

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We injected a little fairness into this budget by addressing some issues that were on the top of the minds of the people of Ontario. Some of those issues included the fact that if we're going to ask the working people of Ontario, the poor in Ontario, to tighten their belts, if we're going to hit those people who are hard-off, then there should be some sharing of that burden. That's what we tried to inject in this budget: some sharing of that burden, so that the burden doesn't fall on those who are hardest hit. In fairness, a lot—a vast majority—of Ontarians agreed that this was the right thing to do, to inject that fairness, to share that burden.

What we saw in this budget was something that was not what we would have wanted, but what we got movement on were some key issues that matter to the people of Ontario. We saw some movement with respect to child care. We saw some movement with respect to poverty issues, including Ontario Works and Ontario disability. We saw some movement with home care and health care.

The issues that affect Ontario, the issues that affect the people of Ontario, remain, but we will continue to be a voice advocating for the concerns of Ontarians. We will continue to fight for the things that we've raised and will continue to raise. This is only a step in the right direction, but by no means are we satisfied with the entire budget. We are simply injecting that fairness and advocating, on behalf of the people of Ontario, to increase at least some measure of relief for people who are hard-hit, to provide some measure of relief in these difficult times. I think we've done that, and we'll continue to work for the people of Ontario.

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

Mr. Bob Delaney: There's one point on which I'd like to agree with my colleague from Timmins–James Bay: It is indeed a Liberal budget. It's a budget that reduces the deficit. It's a budget that controls spending. It's a budget that heads toward balance. It's a budget that sustains services. Most importantly, it's a budget that involves compromise. It's a budget that the NDP has indicated will pass, because we acted as adults, because we were mature and, most importantly, because we talked to each other.

As a Liberal, I look at the compromise that we're discussing today and I think to myself, "I probably would have wanted a little bit more." As the member from Timmins–James Bay has told us, he said he looked at the compromise and thought, "Well, I probably would have wanted a little bit more." So we both agree there's some more work to do.

One thing I've noticed is that across from me, from where I sit, also sit 17 honest, decent people who have sent a clear message, in their agreement to work with the government today, that they're responsible, mature adults, that they've decided to do the thing that 13 million Ontarians voted to send us here to do, which is to govern this province and to act in the best interests of 13 million people. I think what we've seen here is an

agreement and a compromise that's going to enable us to do that, not to have our fourth election in 18 months, because nobody wanted that. I think everybody gave a little bit here and everybody realized that there's more work to do. In the spirit of co-operation and in the spirit with which Ontarians sent us here to do work on their behalf, I'd like to say to my New Democratic colleagues: I am proud to serve with you. I recognize the compromises that you've made. Together, we're going to go forth on behalf of all Ontarians. Thank you.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): That concludes the time for questions and comments. I return to the member from Timmins–James Bay for his reply.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I just want to thank members for their comments. I would just say I disagree vehemently with the member from Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound, who says that we shouldn't be providing a subsidy to the ONTC. I understand that's the position of your caucus, but, God, even Mike Harris changed his mind on that one—and he was a pretty far right-wing guy—because he understood that if you don't allow the Ontario Northland to run, there are consequences to that. So when he tried to privatize it, he went to Canadian National Railway and said, "Can I make a deal with you?" Then CNR said, "Unless you give me the subsidy, I'm not taking it over." So he said, "Well, if I've got to give a subsidy, I might as well keep it." So we've kept it running since that time.

I disagree with the Conservatives that we shouldn't provide a subsidy. Why is it right to not give a subsidy to the Ontario Northland rail, but we can give a subsidy to GO Transit? Why is it right that you can give a subsidy to the transit services around this province in various cities and towns? Those subsidies are for a reason: because it's part of public policy. It's transportation infrastructure that interconnects with other means of transportation: road, air, rail.

It's also an issue around the environment. Think about the amount of goods we transport out of northeastern Ontario. If we take that off the rail and put it on trucks, it's not only more money to ship, but it's also harder on the environment. Plus, it's harder on our roads.

In the case of some companies, they are completely set with their companies to ship everything by rail, so if you shut the rail down, they've got to put it on a truck, they've got to bring it to somewhere there's a rail and put it back on the rail so they can get it to their customer, who only accepts by train. There's a whole bunch of them. Agrium is exactly in that situation. Agrium would be hard put to stay open if the Ontario Northland shut down—plus other projects that are coming online north of Hearst in regard to what is happening with some of the mining further north of Hearst.

We'll fight hard, and hopefully the government will bend on that one.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Before I ask for further debate, I'll remind the House that the House gave consent to allow the New Democrats and the

Liberals to trade their speaking opportunities. So I now look to the Conservative Party for a speaker.

Mr. Bill Walker: Point of order, Mr. Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): A point of order: the member for Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound.

Mr. Bill Walker: I would just ask my colleague from Timmins–James Bay—I did not make a reference specifically to a subsidy to Ontario Northland. I made a general comment about subsidies cannot be continued for everything out there, or we're in a \$15.3-billion deficit—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Thank you. I don't find that's a point of order, but it's a point of information that the House might want to consider.

Further debate?

Mrs. Christine Elliott: I do appreciate the opportunity to speak to this budget bill, especially since I realize that we are coming very close to the end of our debate time on it. Many of my colleagues have already raised some good points and reasons why this budget has failed the people of Ontario and has failed to put the province of Ontario back on track to economic productivity and prosperity. But I would like to discuss an additional feature of this budget that, in my view, is going to compound our province's profound financial troubles, and that is this budget's clear failure to assure international credit rating agencies that this government is committed to getting this province back on track. Following the budget, the Financial Post reported, "Ontario's ... budget has received lukewarm response from bond investors and credit rating agencies as they question whether the ... heavily indebted ... province can deliver on pledges..."

After seeing the Liberals' budget, another international credit rating agency, Moody's, which lowered Ontario's economic outlook to negative in December, said that a downgrade was "still a possibility" and that they are concerned about this province's economic growth.

Perhaps most concerning, however, is that there's little faith among credit rating agencies that Ontario's fortunes will improve. The best the province can hope for—the best, Mr. Speaker—is that it could maintain simply the status quo. Specifically, "Jennifer Wong, Moody's lead analyst for Ontario, said a shift to a 'stable' outlook could take at least a year or more to establish, while an upgrade to a 'positive' outlook remains unlikely."

In response to the budget, Ms. Wong has said, "The outlook is negative, so the pressure is on the downside. We've stated that it's unlikely the province would get upgraded, so it's whether there is further downward pressure or whether it stabilizes..."

"I don't see them going to a positive outlook any time soon. As to going back to stable ... we're assessing the ability to stabilize their debt burden over the medium term. So it's really about whether they can close their fiscal gap and whether they can stabilize the debt burden."

In other words, Mr. Speaker, not only is there a further downgrade still on the table, but more concerning is the

fact that an upgrade is not in the foreseeable future. The single most important factor for Moody's is assessing the province's ability to stabilize our debt burden. Clearly, they've looked at the McGuinty Liberals' decade-long spending spree, and they're not confident they have it in them to curb this spending.

Further, both the Canadian rating agency DBRS, Dominion Bond Rating Service, and Calgary's Bissett Investment Management stated that they're concerned because the budget is based on best-case scenarios rather than taking a more realistic view of future economic growth and their ability to rein in spending.

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In response to the budget, the Globe and Mail writes, "Investors and credit raters remain on edge. To achieve the budget's far-reaching goals, Mr. McGuinty will have to wrestle wage concessions from powerful unions." There is also more concern among rating agencies that the proposed budget savings are simply not sustainable over the long term.

Though the Liberals may take short-term steps to cut this budget, they're unable to continue those savings into the future.

Mario Angastiniotis, lead analyst for Ontario at Standard and Poor's, identified this concern, saying, "You're only getting \$2 billion savings in the first year with the most detail on that year, and then once you go in the outer years, your savings are increasingly moving beyond the political cycle"—in other words, past the next election.

Currently, all three credit rating agencies that comment on the budget—Moody's, Standard and Poor's and DBRS—have given Ontario a credit rating below the federal government's top rating. All of this comes after the McGuinty Liberals oversaw Ontario's credit rating being downgraded in 2009 by Standard and Poor's and DBRS.

All of these statistics are interesting, but I imagine some of the viewers out there might be wondering: Why is it important? Well, it's important because Ontario currently spends \$10 billion a year on payments for money borrowed, interest payments and service charges. That is \$10 billion a year, the third-largest expenditure in government behind health care and education. Imagine what that could do in terms of being able to build new hospitals, to be able to upgrade our education system, to be able to take care of vulnerable children, children with disabilities and adults with disabilities. It's a huge amount of money.

As my colleague the member from Durham said in his earlier talk on this subject, we have a situation right now where we have low interest rates. If our interest rates were to rise even by one percentage point, that could increase our payments by \$500 million a year. That's a huge amount. So we need to know and the people of Ontario need to know that, for all of the concessions that this government is making, especially with the announcements that have been made this afternoon about the deal that has been reached between the McGuinty Liberals

and the third party, all of this is going to cost money, which means that we're going to have to borrow more money, unless they're going to be really serious about reining in spending. Certainly, we haven't seen any indication today that they're prepared to do that.

It's clear from non-partisan, objective financial estimates that Ontario currently sits in pressing and precarious fiscal circumstances that require (a) a clear plan for debt reduction and (b) a clear plan for economic growth. That's the point at which we started. That's what we've been focused on since the election last year and that's what we've been talking about repeatedly in this House since then. We've been talking about what we need to do in order to rein in spending to be able to bring this province back into balance by 2017-18 and to create a clear plan for private sector job growth.

Some of the Liberal members have suggested that we dismissed this budget out of hand, without proper consultation or consideration of its provisions. But the fact of the matter is, we have been putting forward ideas based on these two priorities for the last six months or so—all of which have been consistently rejected by this government. What we've been talking about—and there have been meetings between the Premier and our leader, Tim Hudak, putting these things forward, talking about the principles that we believe are most important—and not only that; putting forward clearly articulated ways that we can achieve these priorities, things like, in terms of reining in spending, legislating a public sector wage freeze.

We believe that most Ontarians know that we're in very difficult economic circumstances right now. They know that everybody has to do their part. We believe that this is fair. If everyone is legislated to have a wage freeze, then you don't have to pick winners and losers. It's fair to everyone. Everyone knows what they can expect.

Well, that was initially rejected out of hand by this government, first of all on the basis that it was unconstitutional, but then I think, when they did their research, they found out that, in fact, there are ways that this can be achieved in situations where there are pressing fiscal circumstances and the overall objectives of the province in making sure that we can stay solvent are more important and that there is a way one can achieve that. Now what we have in the budget is a sort of, kind of, "We'll do it if we have to, but we're not really sure we have to." It isn't helping anybody. In the negotiations that are coming forward, I think it is with fair comment that some of the groups are saying there's not negotiating in good faith, because they're holding it in their back pocket and they're not really saying what they intend to do. We think that this is something that isn't satisfactory and that we should have a clearly articulated position from this government, but they haven't come forward with that yet.

We also have put forward that we could cut some of the expenses of government by ending some of the ridiculous subsidies that are being paid on some of the FIT and microFIT contracts for renewable energy, on the

basis that we simply can't afford it. It's not fair to either individuals in Ontario who are seeing their hydro bills skyrocket, nor is it good for businesses who currently exist in Ontario, who are finding it increasingly hard to keep up with the rapidly increasing hydro costs they're experiencing. But, moreover, I think it's fair to say that we are causing a lot of businesses that might otherwise consider investing in Ontario and setting up shop here to not do that because we can't assure them of either a reliable or affordable source of energy. We've talked about that; that has also been rejected.

Thirdly, we talked about fixing our arbitration system here in Ontario to make sure that the decisions that are rendered are more open and transparent, so we can understand the basis for the decisions, and that there is a significant consideration that's being paid to the ability to pay. It's all well and good to create settlements that satisfy everybody, make everybody happy, but if there's no ability to pay, they're not good for anybody.

Fourthly, we've talked about job creation. One way that we suggested it could be done is to change the apprenticeship system so that we could change the ratios and allow more young people to get into skilled trades; that could free up to 200,000 spaces for young people. I think every person in this House, as we went door to door in the last election, realized that we've got a significant problem with unemployment, particularly youth unemployment, and this could go a long way towards alleviating some of those problems.

Sadly, this budget doesn't achieve any of these priorities. With respect to the reduction in spending, this budget is a complete failure. In fact, it actually increases spending for the next year by almost \$2 billion. Then, the other proposed spending reductions are again pushed off past the next election cycle.

Clearly, the Liberal government is not really serious about reducing the spending, and I think that's reflected in the reluctance of the credit rating agencies to really believe them at this point. I really just don't think it's in their DNA to do it. I think that many people are concerned about that, including the credit rating agencies.

Also, with respect to private sector job creation, this budget is a dismal failure; it really doesn't address that. In fact, not only does it fail to create jobs here in the province of Ontario, but it is arguable that it's actually taking jobs out of this province. There are a couple of specific examples, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to point to.

First of all, one is in the horse racing industry. Now, we heard a lot of talk from this government about how they were going to cut costs and they were going to achieve the savings in the industry by ending what they called the "subsidy." In fact, of course, what it was was a revenue-sharing agreement that was brought about at the time that the slots were allowed into the horse racing venues. This is a significantly short-sighted decision because it's going to affect almost 60,000 jobs here in the province of Ontario—jobs that employ not just people in the racing industry but people who are in veterinary

services, farmers, other people involved with animal care and so on.

This is something that is also going to cause a lot of people who are going to have trouble finding jobs in the private sector—who will probably end up having to go on social assistance, perhaps even permanently.

Secondly, we've heard just in the last little bit about some of the concessions that have been made by this government in order to get the third party to vote with them in terms of the budget. Some of these concessions are going to cost a significant amount of money, Mr. Speaker, and one wonders where that money is going to come from.

Certainly, with some of the decisions that were made in the last few days, there was an announcement that was made on Friday about further cuts to the generic pharmaceutical industry. That is another industry that's going to be significantly impacted by this decision. They're not at all happy, and that may well result in jobs leaving the province of Ontario as well. There are some 8,000 good-paying jobs in the generic industry right now that could be further affected by the short-sighted decisions being made by this government.

All in all, Mr. Speaker, we're concerned about all of these things. We're concerned about the fact that this government refuses to listen to us, refuses to listen to us not only on the budget but also with respect to our request for a select committee so that we can get to the bottom of the Ornge scandal. So, for this reason, Mr. Speaker, I have no choice, really, than to call for adjournment of the debate.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Ms. Elliott has moved the adjournment of the debate. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour of the motion will please say "aye."

All those opposed will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the nays have it.

Call in the members. This will be a 30-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1700 to 1730.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Will the members please take their seats.

Ms. Elliott has moved the adjournment of the debate. All those in favour of the motion will please rise and remain standing while they are counted by the table staff.

Okay, take your seats.

All those opposed to the motion will rise and be counted by the table staff.

Take your seats, please. Thank you.

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 26; the nays are 37.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I declare the motion lost.

Pursuant to standing order 58(d), there having been eight hours of debate, I am now required to put the question on the budget motion.

On March 27, 2012, Mr. Duncan moved, seconded by Mr. McGuinty, that this House approves in general the budgetary policy of the government.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour of the motion will please say "aye."

All those opposed will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

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

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): There are no points of order during a vote.

I beg to inform the House that I have received a deferral motion by the chief government whip. The vote will take place tomorrow at the time of deferred votes, after question period.

Vote deferred.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I beg to inform the House that, pursuant to standing 98(c), a change has been made to the order of precedence on the ballot list for private members' public business, such that Mr. Delaney assumes ballot item number 75 and Ms. DiNovo assumes ballot item number 38.

Orders of the day.

Hon. John Milloy: Mr. Speaker, I move adjournment of the House.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Mr. Milloy has moved the adjournment of the House. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour of the motion will please say "aye."

All those opposed will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it. Carried.

This House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 9 a.m.

The House adjourned at 1734.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO
ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lieutenant Governor / Lieutenant-gouverneur: Hon. / L'hon. David C. Onley, O.Ont.

Speaker / Président: Hon. / L'hon. Dave Levac

Clerk / Greffière: Deborah Deller

Clerks-at-the-Table / Greffiers parlementaires: Todd Decker, Lisa Freedman, Tonia Grannum

Sergeant-at-Arms / Sergent d'armes: Dennis Clark

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Albanese, Laura (LIB)	York South–Weston / York-Sud–Weston	
Armstrong, Teresa J. (NDP)	London–Fanshawe	
Arnott, Ted (PC)	Wellington–Halton Hills	First Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Premier vice-président du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée
Bailey, Robert (PC)	Sarnia–Lambton	
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
Barrett, Toby (PC)	Haldimand–Norfolk	
Bartolucci, Hon. / L'hon. Rick (LIB)	Sudbury	Chair of Cabinet / Président du Conseil des ministres Minister of Northern Development and Mines / Ministre du Développement du Nord et des Mines
Bentley, Hon. / L'hon. Christopher (LIB)	London West / London-Ouest	Minister of Energy / Ministre de l'Énergie
Berardinetti, Lorenzo (LIB)	Scarborough Southwest / Scarborough-Sud-Ouest	
Best, Hon. / L'hon. Margaret R. (LIB)	Scarborough–Guildwood	Minister of Consumer Services / Ministre des Services aux consommateurs
Bisson, Gilles (NDP)	Timmins–James Bay / Timmins–Baie James	House Leader, Recognized Party / Leader parlementaire de parti reconnu
Bradley, Hon. / L'hon. James J. (LIB)	St. Catharines	Minister of the Environment / Ministre de l'Environnement Deputy Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint du gouvernement
Broten, Hon. / L'hon. Laurel C. (LIB)	Etobicoke–Lakeshore	Minister of Education / Ministre de l'Éducation Minister Responsible for Women's Issues / Ministre déléguée à la Condition féminine
Campbell, Sarah (NDP)	Kenora–Rainy River	
Cansfield, Donna H. (LIB)	Etobicoke Centre / Etobicoke-Centre	
Chan, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Markham–Unionville	Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport / Ministre de Tourisme, de la Culture et du Sport
Chiarelli, Hon. / L'hon. Bob (LIB)	Ottawa West–Nepean / Ottawa-Ouest–Nepean	Minister of Infrastructure / Ministre de l'Infrastructure Minister of Transportation / Ministre des Transports
Chudleigh, Ted (PC)	Halton	
Clark, Steve (PC)	Leeds–Grenville	
Colle, Mike (LIB)	Eglinton–Lawrence	
Coteau, Michael (LIB)	Don Valley East / Don Valley-Est	
Crack, Grant (LIB)	Glengarry–Prescott–Russell	
Craitor, Kim (LIB)	Niagara Falls	
Damerla, Dipika (LIB)	Mississauga East–Cooksville / Mississauga-Est–Cooksville	
Delaney, Bob (LIB)	Mississauga–Streetsville	
Dhillon, Vic (LIB)	Brampton West / Brampton-Ouest	
Dickson, Joe (LIB)	Ajax–Pickering	
DiNovo, Cheri (NDP)	Parkdale–High Park	
Duguid, Hon. / L'hon. Brad (LIB)	Scarborough Centre / Scarborough-Centre	Minister of Economic Development and Innovation / Ministre du Développement économique et de l'Innovation
Duncan, Hon. / L'hon. Dwight (LIB)	Windsor–Tecumseh	Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet / Président du Conseil de gestion du gouvernement Deputy Premier / Vice-premier ministre Minister of Finance / Ministre des Finances
Dunlop, Garfield (PC)	Simcoe North / Simcoe-Nord	
Elliott, Christine (PC)	Whitby–Oshawa	Deputy Leader, Official Opposition / Chef adjointe de l'opposition officielle

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Fedeli, Victor (PC)	Nipissing	
Flynn, Kevin Daniel (LIB)	Oakville	
Forster, Cindy (NDP)	Welland	Deputy House Leader, Recognized Party / Leader parlementaire adjointe de parti reconnu
Gélinas, France (NDP)	Nickel Belt	
Gerretsen, Hon. / L'hon. John (LIB)	Kingston and the Islands / Kingston et les Îles	Attorney General / Procureur général
Gravelle, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Thunder Bay–Superior North / Thunder Bay–Superior-Nord	Minister of Natural Resources / Ministre des Richesses naturelles
Hardeman, Ernie (PC)	Oxford	
Harris, Michael (PC)	Kitchener–Conestoga	
Hillier, Randy (PC)	Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington	
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 Children and Youth Services / Ministre des Services à l'enfance et à la jeunesse
Hudak, Tim (PC)	Niagara West–Glanbrook / Niagara-Ouest–Glanbrook	Leader, Official Opposition / Chef de l'opposition officielle Leader, Progressive Conservative Party of Ontario / Chef du Parti progressiste-conservateur de l'Ontario
Jackson, Rod (PC)	Barrie	
Jaczek, Helena (LIB)	Oak Ridges–Markham	
Jeffrey, Hon. / L'hon. Linda (LIB)	Brampton–Springdale	Minister of Labour / Ministre du Travail Minister Responsible for Seniors / Ministre déléguée aux Affaires des personnes âgées
Jones, Sylvia (PC)	Dufferin–Caledon	Deputy Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjointe de l'opposition officielle
Klees, Frank (PC)	Newmarket–Aurora	
Kwinter, Monte (LIB)	York Centre / York-Centre	
Leal, Jeff (LIB)	Peterborough	
Leone, Rob (PC)	Cambridge	
Levac, Hon. / L'hon. Dave (LIB)	Brant	Speaker / Président de l'Assemblée législative
MacCharles, Tracy (LIB)	Pickering–Scarborough East / Pickering–Scarborough-Est	
MacLaren, Jack (PC)	Carleton–Mississippi Mills	
MacLeod, Lisa (PC)	Nepean–Carleton	
Mangat, Amrit (LIB)	Mississauga–Brampton South / Mississauga–Brampton-Sud	
Mantha, Michael (NDP)	Algoma–Manitoulin	
Marchese, Rosario (NDP)	Trinity–Spadina	
Matthews, Hon. / L'hon. Deborah (LIB)	London North Centre / London-Centre-Nord	Minister of Health and Long-Term Care / Ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée
Mauro, Bill (LIB)	Thunder Bay–Atikokan	
McDonnell, Jim (PC)	Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry	
McGuinty, Hon. / L'hon. Dalton (LIB)	Ottawa South / Ottawa-Sud	Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs / Ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales Premier / Premier ministre Leader, Government / Chef du gouvernement Leader, Liberal Party of Ontario / Chef du Parti libéral de l'Ontario
McKenna, Jane (PC)	Burlington	
McMeekin, Hon. / L'hon. Ted (LIB)	Ancaster–Dundas–Flamborough–Westdale	Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs / Ministre de l'Agriculture, de l'Alimentation et des Affaires rurales
McNaughton, Monte (PC)	Lambton–Kent–Middlesex	
McNeely, Phil (LIB)	Ottawa–Orléans	
Meilleur, Hon. / L'hon. Madeleine (LIB)	Ottawa–Vanier	Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services / Ministre de la Sécurité communautaire et des Services correctionnels Minister Responsible for Francophone Affairs / Ministre déléguée aux Affaires francophones
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

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Milligan, Rob E. (PC) Milloy, Hon. / L'hon. John (LIB)	Northumberland–Quinte West Kitchener Centre / Kitchener-Centre	Minister of Community and Social Services / Ministre des Services sociaux et communautaires Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire du gouvernement
Moridi, Reza (LIB) Munro, Julia (PC)	Richmond Hill York–Simcoe	Second Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Deuxième vice-présidente du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Murray, Hon. / L'hon. Glen R. (LIB)	Toronto Centre / Toronto-Centre	Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities / Ministre de la Formation et des Collèges et Universités
Naqvi, Yasir (LIB)	Ottawa Centre / Ottawa-Centre	
Natyshak, Taras (NDP)	Essex	
Nicholls, Rick (PC)	Chatham–Kent–Essex	
O'Toole, John (PC)	Durham	
Oraziotti, David (LIB)	Sault Ste. Marie	
Ouellette, Jerry J. (PC)	Oshawa	
Pettapiece, Randy (PC)	Perth–Wellington	
Piruzza, Teresa (LIB)	Windsor West / Windsor-Ouest	
Prue, Michael (NDP)	Beaches–East York	
Qaadri, Shafiq (LIB)	Etobicoke North / Etobicoke-Nord	
Sandals, Liz (LIB)	Guelph	
Schein, Jonah (NDP)	Davenport	
Scott, Laurie (PC)	Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock	
Sergio, Mario (LIB)	York West / York-Ouest	
Shurman, Peter (PC)	Thornhill	
Singh, Jagmeet (NDP)	Bramalea–Gore–Malton	
Smith, Todd (PC)	Prince Edward–Hastings	
Sorbara, Greg (LIB)	Vaughan	
Sousa, Hon. / L'hon. Charles (LIB)	Mississauga South / Mississauga-Sud	Minister of Citizenship and Immigration / Ministre des Affaires civiques et de l'Immigration Minister Responsible for the 2015 Pan and Parapan American Games / Ministre responsable des Jeux panaméricains et parapanaméricains de 2015
Tabuns, Peter (NDP)	Toronto–Danforth	
Takhar, Hon. / L'hon. Harinder S. (LIB)	Mississauga–Erindale	Minister of Government Services / Ministre des Services gouvernementaux
Taylor, Monique (NDP)	Hamilton Mountain	
Thompson, Lisa M. (PC)	Huron–Bruce	
Vanthof, John (NDP)	Timiskaming–Cochrane	
Walker, Bill (PC)	Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound	
Wilson, Jim (PC)	Simcoe–Grey	Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire de l'opposition officielle
Witmer, Elizabeth (PC)	Kitchener–Waterloo	
Wong, Soo (LIB)	Scarborough–Agincourt	
Wynne, Hon. / L'hon. Kathleen O. (LIB)	Don Valley West / Don Valley-Ouest	Minister of Aboriginal Affairs / Ministre des Affaires autochtones Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / Ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement
Yakabuski, John (PC)	Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke	
Yurek, Jeff (PC)	Elgin–Middlesex–London	
Zimmer, David (LIB)	Willowdale	

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COMITÉS PERMANENTS DE L'ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE**

Standing Committee on Estimates / Comité permanent des budgets des dépenses

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Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Taras Natyshak
Grant Crack, Kim Craitor
Vic Dhillon, Michael Harris
Rob Leone, Taras Natyshak
Rick Nicholls, Michael Prue
Mario Sergio
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Valerie Quioc Lim

**Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs /
Comité permanent des finances et des affaires économiques**

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Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Teresa Piruzza
Bob Delaney, Victor Fedeli
Cindy Forster, Monte McNaughton
Yasir Naqvi, Teresa Piruzza
Michael Prue, Peter Shurman
Soo Wong
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Valerie Quioc Lim

Standing Committee on General Government / Comité permanent des affaires gouvernementales

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Vice-Chair / Vice-président: David Zimmer
Sarah Campbell, Michael Coteau
Joe Dickson, Rosario Marchese
David Oraziotti, Laurie Scott
Todd Smith, Jeff Yurek
David Zimmer
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Sylwia Przewdziecki

Standing Committee on Government Agencies / Comité permanent des organismes gouvernementaux

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Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Phil McNeely
Donna H. Cansfield, Helena Jaczek
Bill Mauro, Jim McDonell
Phil McNeely, Randy Pettapiece
Peter Tabuns, Monique Taylor
Lisa M. Thompson
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Trevor Day

Standing Committee on Justice Policy / Comité permanent de la justice

Chair / Présidente: Laura Albanese
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Shafiq Qaadri
Laura Albanese, Teresa J. Armstrong
Lorenzo Berardinetti, Mike Colle
Frank Klees, Jack MacLaren
Paul Miller, Rob E. Milligan
Shafiq Qaadri
Committee Clerk / Greffier: William Short

Standing Committee on the Legislative Assembly / Comité permanent de l'Assemblée législative

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Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Lisa MacLeod
Laura Albanese, Bas Balkissoon
Gilles Bisson, Donna H. Cansfield
Steve Clark, Garfield Dunlop
Jeff Leal, Lisa MacLeod
Jonah Schein
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Trevor Day

Standing Committee on Public Accounts / Comité permanent des comptes publics

Chair / Président: Norm Miller
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Toby Barrett
Toby Barrett, France Gélinas
Phil McNeely, Norm Miller
Reza Moridi, Jerry J. Ouellette
Liz Sandals, Jagmeet Singh
David Zimmer
Committee Clerk / Greffier: William Short

Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills / Comité permanent des règlements et des projets de loi d'intérêt privé

Chair / Président: Peter Tabuns
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: John Vanthof
Michael Coteau, Grant Crack
Vic Dhillon, Randy Hillier
Rod Jackson, Mario Sergio
Peter Tabuns, John Vanthof
Bill Walker
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Tamara Pomanski

Standing Committee on Social Policy / Comité permanent de la politique sociale

Chair / Président: Ernie Hardeman
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Ted Chudleigh
Ted Chudleigh, Dipika Damerla
Cheri DiNovo, Kevin Daniel Flynn
Ernie Hardeman, Tracy MacCharles
Amrit Mangat, Michael Mantha
Jane McKenna
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Katch Koch

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